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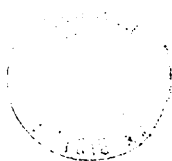
THE AL-FAJR MOVEMENT AND ITS  
PLACE IN MODERN SUDANESE LITERATURE

Presented by

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June, 1979.



DEDICATED TO

‘ĀYDA, MY WIFE, AND OUR SON ḤUSĀM

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TRANSLITERATION

The method of transliteration adopted by the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Edinburgh has been followed in this thesis with certain modifications.

## ABSTRACT

In the year 1934 a coterie of young men launched the literary magazine Al-Fajr and marked the beginning of the first literarily conscious movement in the Sudan. Both movement and initiators have come to be known by the name of the magazine itself.

In this thesis the first attempt to study the Al-Fajr group (or movement) has been made. The study investigates the general and special circumstances in which the Group were nurtured, the private gatherings which led to their appearance and the value of their contribution to modern Arabic literature, with particular reference to their critical and poetic works.

In chapter one a survey of the Sudanese literary heritage, including popular and classical literature to the appearance of the Al-Fajr group, has been carried out. This chapter provides the necessary literary background to the Al-Fajr movement.

Chapter two traces the literary origins of the Group and describes the evolutionary factors which led to their appearance.

Chapter three is devoted to a description of the magazine Al-Fajr; its objective and policy, its collection and the general features of its writings.

In chapter four the literary ideas of the Group have been examined and the theoretical and practical aspects of their criticism have been studied.

The final chapter deals with the poetry of the Group. It attempts to analyse the content of this poetry, study its form and assess its value in terms of innovation and rejuvenation.

The appendix is supplementary to the final chapter. It contains the Arabic text of the poems which have been studied in this chapter.



## CHAPTER I

### THE SUDANESE LITERARY HERITAGE:

### POPULAR AND CLASSICAL LITERATURE

### TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE FAJR GROUP

#### SECTION A

#### On Popular Literature:

The Arabic-speaking Muslim tribes of the northern and central Sudan whom Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha brought under his rule in 1821 were by no means primitive or savage. True, with the decline of Funj power, the tribe or the clan was the largest effective political unit: true also that the towns were little more than agglomerations of villages on sites favourable to the exchange of merchandise. Nevertheless, these tribal communities of cultivators and herdsmen possessed a vigorous if rudimentary culture, and produced a small literate elite who were in touch with the civilization of the great Islamic world. The poets and fekis were the characteristic features of traditional Sudanese culture. The poets were the commentators on the vicissitudes of tribal and individual life. Their utterances, generally brief and intensely allusive, were given in the dialectal forms of Arabic. They were composed spontaneously but were often passed on by word of mouth and transmitted to later generations. In this chapter we shall first concern ourselves with these utterances, which constitute what is generally called the oral literature,

and then move on to a critical survey of the stages of development of the classical literature in the Sudan, from the time of the Turco-Egyptian rule down to the Condominium.

The elements underlying Sudanese life and customs are varied and diverse, many of them of great antiquity. In part, they derive from the Arab heritage, both Pre-Islamic and Islamic. In other instances they are purely local in origin or are a result of Egyptian or Hamitic influences.

To this diversity of origin can be ascribed the substantial and rich store of oral literature which the Sudanese people have come to inherit. This includes proverbs, songs, popular stories and historical traditions.

#### Sudanese Colloquial Arabic:

As a dialect, Sudanese Arabic presents a number of interesting features. Of these most remarkable is the fact that, though surrounded on all sides by African languages, it has maintained its linguistic purity intact. In this respect some facts may be pointed out. When they entered the Sudan and finally overran the country, the Muslim Arabs were undoubtedly the victorious side. Their tongue, the language of the Qur'ān, was treated with the utmost respect and reverence. The old Arabian conservatism and feeling of superiority contributed towards the dominance of their language and the preservation of its purity. It may also be observed that the geographical environment in

which they came to live was not unlike that of their motherland. These factors, as well as others, have contributed towards making Sudanese Arabic one of the closest forms of Arabic to the classical, particularly in the field of vocabulary. This is despite the fact that few of those who speak it can claim unmixed Arab descent.

From their ancestors the Sudanese have come to inherit a delight in faṣāḥa which is to be found in such devices as paronomasia (jinās), metaphor and allusive descriptions and in the use of a large vocabulary of synonyms. Such pleasure in linguistic effect is sometimes reflected in ordinary conversation.

From the linguistic point of view it has been noted by one distinguished scholar that, generally speaking, there is no great difference between classical Arabic and its dialect forms as far as the root-words and their derivative forms, structure and paradigms are concerned. The main difference is to be found in pronunciation, where there is inevitably a certain amount of modification in the sounds of words and letters.<sup>1</sup> The relative purity of Sudanese Arabic has been stressed also by Prof. 'Abd Allāh Al-Ṭayyib, who observed that it is the least corrupt and

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1. 'Abdīn, Tārīkh al-Thaqāfa al-'Arabiyya (2nd ed.), Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1967, p. 249.

most polished among the colloquial forms of Arabic.<sup>1</sup> Good examples that present themselves readily to the observer are the everyday usage of nūn al-ināth, the feminine 'n', the classical passive voice structure, the negative prefix (mā), and many other features which are purely classical and peculiar to Sudanese colloquial Arabic.

#### The Place of Popular Literature in Sudanese Life:

The uncritical might be tempted to think that because popular literature has been evolved without reference to the rules and principles of the literary language, it must on that account be a second-rate literature, of necessity inferior to the classical one. This is not necessarily the case, for although popular literature follows conventions of its own, it nevertheless has qualities of spontaneity, unaffectedness and sincerity which are rarely found in the literary language.

As for the popularity of oral literature in the Sudan it may be recalled here that until the beginning of the 20th century illiteracy was widely spread in the country. The religious schools (khalwas), which were the main centres for learning did not pay attention to the teaching of literary Arabic or classical poetry. They were solely concerned with reading and writing and the teaching of the Qur'ān by rote. Under such circumstances it was only

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1. Al-Ṭayyib, Muḥāḍarāt fi'l-Ittijāhāt, 1959, pp. 9-10.

For further details see 'Abdīn's Tārīkh, p. 22.

natural that for the vast majority of the people popular, or oral, literature presented the most viable form of literary expression. It was in colloquial Arabic that the poets gave expression to their feelings of love and enthusiasm and hoped to reach the wider public and lift their hearts. They felt at home with the day-to-day language, and although bound by certain conventions, popular literature proved to be most appealing.

With literary Arabic the case is different. The poet treats his vocation as a fine art and approaches it with deliberation. He has expended time and thought upon his training, and in this sense he may be regarded as a specialist. Consequently, some of his compositions may be produced in a mechanical manner, especially so when the inspiration is absent, in which case he will have to rely upon his head and not his heart. Further, the classical language is essentially an alien language to the man of letters. The fact that he starts grappling with its perplexities and peculiarities only when he attends a ma'had or a school making it all the more difficult for him to maintain a good balance between his command of the language, on the one hand, and a true expression of his feelings and aspirations on the other.

It is when we look at the two types of literature in this perspective that we feel more than justified in rating popular literature more highly than classical literature in the Sudan.

The fact that popular literature is bound up with

social life, originating from and current among the common people, illustrating their common life with its interests and enthusiasms must have prompted some Arab scholars to use the term 'national' as a variant of 'popular' to denote oral literature and distinguish it from the classical one, the role of the latter being limited since it is only practised by and meant for a fairly small elite.

The immediateness and truthfulness of popular literature has been emphasised by the pioneer Sudanese historian, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥīm, who chose in his Nafathāt to start his survey of Sudanese literature by reviewing the popular traditions.<sup>1</sup>

To this spontaneity and truthfulness one might attribute the fact that during the troubled times of Al-Turkiyya and Al-Mahdiyya it was only the voice of the colloquial poets that could be heard in protest against the injustices and grievances which befell the people. In this respect Sudanese popular literature may pride itself on the immortal expressions of patriotism and enthusiasm contained in the poems of the poetesses Mihayra Bint 'Abbūd, Umm Misaymis, Bint al-Makkāwī, and the renowned poet, Al-Ḥārdallu.

### Main Branches

Popular literature has three main branches: the popular

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1. 'Abd al-Raḥīm, Nafathāt al-Yarā', n.d., pp. 13-14.

tale, colloquial verse and proverbs. Although a detailed study of popular literature as such lies outside the scope of this study, it is worth dwelling upon the first two for a while in order to acquaint ourselves with them and to explain their place in Sudanese social and cultural life.

### The Popular Tale:

To a greater or less degree the popular tale may be considered to be the basic form of popular literature. The other two either branch out from or flow into it: the proverbs are in essence stories or anecdotes, while colloquial verse or the song, is but another manifestation of this. The popular tale, it is to be borne in mind, even at the present time, is either composed in poetry or is a mixture of prose and poetry.<sup>1</sup>

As to the ability to compose in popular literature, it goes without saying that it is much easier to relate, compose, or invent, a tale or a story than it is to compose a poem, or construct a proverb. Hence, it is reasonable to reckon the popular tale as the main source of popular literature. To this one may add that in it too, a greater reflection of the true nature of the people and their artistic abilities can be found.

Of the different forms of the popular tale the heroic ballads merit particular consideration. These ballads are

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1. 'Ābdīn, Tarīkh, op. cit., p. 395.

to be found all over the world, and among peoples who may or may not possess any kind of literature, poets, singers or reciters.<sup>1</sup>

Not unlike the English ballads, they are the poetic illustration of a community's heroic ideal, and a means of sustaining a way of life based on that ideal. From the ballad of Shā' al-Dīn, for instance, to take a local example, or that of Abū Zayd al-Hilālī, which has been imported from the Arab world, the listeners learn how to comport themselves in the face of adversity or dilemma; this may be regarded as the social and artistic purpose of the popular tale of heroic deeds. To achieve this purpose these epics went far beyond objective reality and presented heroic values and actions in high relief by means of hyperbole.

Such exuberant themes with their dreams of a remote past of clubs and lances are still capable of inspiring the common people and indeed modern intellectuals who feel involved to the hilt when they listen to songs in praise of such heroes. The popularity of the Abū Zayd and 'Antara tales in the Sudan might be likened to that of Robin Hood as far as the themes are concerned, the social struggle being the motive force for the heroes' adventures. Each of the three heroes is simply an

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1. Sharp, C.J., English Folk Song, some conclusions, (4th revised ed.), 1972, p. 110.



artistic generalization, a hero conceived as ideal by the common people.

As for the historical stories proper, they are songs based on the chronicles of great events and major battles.<sup>1</sup> Most of what has survived seems to be of less interest to the common people. Such songs are few and tend not to maintain their position in the singers' repertoire.

### Colloquial Verse:

The pleasure in faṣāḥa, i.e. the ability to use the language skilfully and with a view to rhetorical and linguistic effects, is most conspicuously displayed in the colloquial verse. Indeed this verse depends for its effect on the linguistic treatment rather than originality of ideas or depth of emotional content. The subject matter, it might be argued, is stereotyped and limited to a few conventional topics together with worn-out colloquial similes and metaphors. But the art of the poet consists in discovering a variety of ways for the expression of a narrow range of ideas. The sincerity of the poet along with the simplicity and familiarity of his language made colloquial verse all the more successful.

The vocabulary of this poetry may sound archaic and incomprehensible to the modern reader, and accordingly he may not find much enjoyment in it. But one has to remember

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1. E.g. the song of Shaqba of the Marghūmāb tribe believed to have been composed in the last quarter of the 18th century.

the times and the society in which it was composed. Sudanese Arabic has undergone a tremendous change since the times of the Mahdiyya and, before it, the Turkiyya. Indeed, the history of the popular song or poem can be compared with that of language, in which the formative process is strongest in the period before it has been committed to a written form.

The verse rarely attains a high standard of excellence. Much of it can be described as crude, since the art is not cultivated with conscious effort, nor held in great esteem by the townsmen today. Although people of taste and learning might be tempted to compose in dialect, the authors of colloquial verse are often unlettered people composing in the folk-song traditions. It would, therefore, be unfair to compare the colloquial verse with the finished art of the classical poem. Nonetheless, some of the tendencies and characteristics which are operative in the creation of the classical qasida have certainly survived and displayed themselves in the colloquial verse of the Sudan. The laments of Umm Misaymis, for example, reflect some of the characteristic features of the ancient Arabic marthiya, such as the 'negative praise', i.e. the denial of bad qualities in the person to be praised, and the frequent change from the third person to the second or from statement to address.

Until quite recently the colloquial verse was at the centre of the Sudanese people's life. Whether chanted in the old traditional manner or sung on Omdurman Radio

Station it used to provide the listeners with much joy and entertainment. The traditional types of it vary from one part of the country to another, but its uses may be briefly enumerated as follows:

1. Namm or Namīm: songs of camel-riders, generally love-songs in which the singer urges his mount to carry him toward his beloved.
2. Ghuna' l-muṭraq: songs in praise of chiefs and great men or laments for their death. They are so called because the chant is usually accompanied by rhythmical striking of the ground with a staff (muṭraq)
3. Ghuna' d-dallūka: dance-songs sung by women to the accompaniment of the dance-drum (dallūka); the conventional topics are praise of the brave and generous, generally including the bride and bridegroom, <sup>when performed at weddings</sup> ~~if there are any~~, and censure of the cowardly and mean. They are generally brief improvisations containing allusions to some incidents or person, and serve as expressions of popular approval, admiration or blame. In the western Sudan, for instance, where the woman singers are called the hakkāmas, we find that their tongues were greatly feared, for if they sang against a man's courage, they would certainly destroy his reputation and he might as well leave the community to be quit of such an intolerable nuisance. This kind of thing reminds one of pre-Islamic times when the shā'ir's menaces hurled against the foe were believed to be inevitably fatal; and hence his rhymes were often compared with arrows. In the Sudan, where many Arabian notions and beliefs have

been retained, it is not too surprising to hear of some tribal chiefs who sought to win over certain women singers by bribing them in order to avoid their tongues. By and large, all the Arab tribes, especially the nomads, have their stories which illustrate that the ḥakkāma was an awarder of praise and blame, along with her power to goad men into action.

4. Songs of praise chanted by men to extol the great men of the tribe and commend their virtues as well as those of the warrior and hunter, or the beauty of women. The jirdāgī, the man singer, in this respect was listened to with rapt attention as he praised the principal men or families of the tribe.

5. Songs associated with such celebrations as weddings, circumcisions, feasts and the ceremonies connected with childbirth.

6. Madīḥ, i.e. compositions in praise of the Prophet recited in most cases by professional maddāḥīn or (madādīḥ) to the accompaniment of the tambourine (ṭār). Of a similar type, but not called by this name are the anāshīd in praise of holy men at the dhikr gatherings. The compositions of the maddāḥīn which are often direct and unsophisticated, unlike the verses previously enumerated, are often marred by clumsy and obscure diction.

#### The dubayt and the Modern Song:

Two closely related but highly rated forms of colloquial verse are the dubayt and the modern song.

The Arabic dubayt is a corrupt form of the Persian dū-baytī, which literally means two verses, or a poem consisting of four hemistichs. Such poems were known to the poets of Arabia by the same Persian name, but as to whether the Persians influenced the dubayt of Arabia or the contrary cannot be established with absolute certainty. Nonetheless, the general tendency among literary historians today is to assume that, though the name is Persian, the art is purely of an Arab nature, especially, so long as the metres of the old Persian dū-baytī remain undiscovered. Further, since the Arabic dubayt retains its distinctive Arabic Rajaz metre, it would be more sensible to assume the Arabic dubayt's influence upon the Persian rather than the other way round, especially in view of the Muslim domination over Persia.

In the Sudan the dubayt has been reckoned as a form of colloquial verse in which are inherent some of the basic requirements of classical poetry: the metre, which is not consistently that of Rajaz since it is sometimes a mixture of it and Kāmil<sup>1</sup>, rhyme, imagery and sentiment. When it was first known in the Sudan, it was known by the very name of its metre, i.e. Rajaz; which fact indicates an early stage of the dubayt's development. Later on the

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1. 'Abdīn, 'A. and Ibrahīm, M., Al-Ḥardallu Shā'ir al-Buṭāna, 1st ed., 1957, p. 19, and Ismā'īl ,

Al-Shi'r al-Qawmī fi 'l-Sūdān, 1968, p. 27.

new name, dubayt, came into use.<sup>1</sup>

There are, of course, essential differences between classical and dialect verse. Strictly speaking, the dubayt has no set rules such as those of grammar, prosody and structure. But it has retained the same length as the old Arabian dubayt, i.e. the four hemistichs. Though short in length, a dubayt is complete and independent by itself. Its function is to express a surge of passion on the spur of the moment. This may be a sudden recall of a past encounter, or an expression of joy or bewilderment at a given moment.

In the dubayt of the Sudan a good many classical words and phrases are to be found. Some of those which might at first sight seem corrupt forms or rustic expressions are in point of fact part and parcel of the pure Arabic language, or, in other instances, words pertaining to one of the old Arabian dialects. 'Abdīn holds that by tracing the roots of some of these words contained in the dubayt one may well be able to identify the regions and the tribes of Arabia which carried them into the Sudan.<sup>2</sup>

One important point which needs to be classified is whether the dubayt can be considered as a part of the folk-

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1. Presumably this name emerged first in the east among the Bedouin of al-Buṭāna region, where the name of the poet Al-Ḥardallu was so closely associated with this type of verse that in the western Sudan the dubayt came to be known by the name 'Ḥardallu'.
2. 'Abdīn, Tārīkh, op. cit., p. 22.

lore heritage or not. From what has been said it can be assumed that the dubayt is a form of popular literature that stands on its own. Not unlike the case with <sup>classical</sup> Arabic poetry it retains certain characteristic features and has undergone different stages of development. The fact that there are a few dubayts whose authors are not known should in no way tempt us to relate it to the folk-lore heritage. Such anonymity can be accounted for by one of three factors: either the author's reputation was too feeble to make his name memorable, or that the poet's output was too scarce to earn him reputation, or the author's name has been dropped out of the people's memory with the passing of time. When one remembers that the nomads have long been noted for the spontaneity and extemporaneity with which they compose the dubayt so that it is an everyday occurrence in Bedouin life, it would not be much of a surprise to discover that no great importance is attached to the name of the author.

Further, the dubayt cannot be considered as a crystallized heritage pertaining to the past. At every stage of its development it has taken a new shape. Some of its authors are still alive and even now there are some young poets who have contented themselves with it as a means of literary expression.

As to its subject matter, the dubayt's uses cover virtually all aspects of life. Most prominent among these are those concerned with the description and commendation of the rider's mount, boasting and love.

The Modern Song:

The modern song of today is in part an evolution from the classical dubayt. There are still some song writers who were originally dubayt composers. The song is characterized by its sophisticated themes and refined language which tends to draw more and more upon literary Arabic. The most important factor contributing to its success and popularity is undoubtedly modern music.

In view of the great change in the people's ways of life and attitudes the overwhelming success of the new song comes as no surprise. Regarding the refinement of its language one might attribute it to the spreading of literacy and the centralising influence of modern political and economic conditions. These, along with social change, have contributed to the formation of the language of the capital and its ultimate dominance; a process which has been going on for the last seven decades. Another important factor that has helped in this respect is the natural striving among the educated towards a spoken language of greater refinement and elasticity than are found in the speech of the country-folk and a tendency to use elements derived from ancient and modern literary Arabic. The cultured Syrians and Egyptians who, in the wake of the Reconquest were called upon to teach at the newly established schools, have also had their share in the formation of the language of the capital. Through the mass media, especially Omdurman Radio, the language of the capital has gained tremendous popularity and general acceptance



throughout the country. The modern song which has found expression in this language has thus come to play a most influential role in the people's life.

The decline in the traditional practice of folk-song, or of popular literature at large, is not peculiar to the Sudan. It is to be found in most parts of the world, indeed wherever education, industry and mechanical music have permeated. These and other factors of our time have all had a disruptive effect on the lives and outlook of these homogeneous communities which have in the past been dependent upon their own resources. The immediate effect of their coming into contact with new ways of life is a tendency to reject many things which are associated with the past: folk-songs as well as other home-made products.

Fortunately, there is some indication that this is merely a temporary attitude of mind, which might have been caused by lack of self-confidence during a transitional period of adjustment. Many times singers who have dropped their songs or their children who have never troubled to learn them, have regretted their negligence when they have realized that the songs were held in high esteem by others. Only those, perhaps who have been brought into close contact with the old folk-singers and composers of today, can fully realize how intimately folk-dancing, as well as folk-singing, have been bound up with the social life of the villages and countryside of the Sudan.

## SECTION B

### Evolution of Classical Arabic Poetry in the Sudan

#### (i) Main Genres:

Literary historians have come to accept that from its early beginnings to the present day Arabic poetry in the Sudan has been of four main types:

1. Popular verse which commences with the coming of the Muslim Arabs into the country and was first composed in dialect form. The most prominent feature of this verse is its celebration of desert values and virtues such as courage, hospitality and fidelity.
2. Sūfī classical verse which starts in the Funj period which began in 1504. In its early stages this was composed in a mixture of colloquial and classical Arabic. Its exponents were sūfīs and 'fagīrs' who were very powerful under Funj rule. Its predominant theme was renunciation of earthly vanities and pleasures including the favours of the Sultans.
3. Traditional poetry which started during the Turco-Egyptian administration, that is from 1821 onwards. It is traditional in the sense that it is concerned mainly with conventional themes, or aghrād, of classical poetry, i.e. ghazal (eroticism), waṣf (description), fakhr (boasting), madḥ (panegyric) and rithā' (elegy). The 'Ulamā', mainly Azharīs, were its exponents.
4. Modern poetry which commences in the second decade of

the Anglo-Egyptian rule which officially started after the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement in 1899.

This classification was originally suggested by Dr. 'Abd al-Majīd 'Abdīn in 1953<sup>1</sup> and has been adopted by nearly all literary historians.

Over a quarter of a century has passed since Dr. 'Abdīn proposed this structure, during which time much new research has been carried out and many new discoveries have been made. In particular, Muḥammad Muḥammad 'Alī has made a serious challenge to it after his discovery of four poems written in the Funj era.<sup>2</sup> All this makes it more necessary than ever to reconsider Dr. 'Abdīn's theory.

One central point in 'Alī's argument concerns the diction of the popular verses which have been collected by 'Abdīn on the assumption that they date back to the 16th century. This assumption has been refuted and 'Alī has pointed out that the diction of these verses sounds very modern, so much so that one can easily mistake any of 'Abdīn's songs for a present-day one.

Another point, concerning the commencement of traditional poetry, is that 'Alī strongly rejects the assumption that it was virtually non-existent from the 13th to the 19th centuries. He maintains that throughout their history the Arabs have always shown a strong inclination to give expression to their feelings of nostalgia whenever they

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1. Tārīkh al-Thaqāfā al-'Arabiyya fi l-Sūdān, op. cit.  
pp. 183-4.

2. Cf. Al-Shi'r al-Sūdānī fi'l-Ma'ārik al-Siyāsiyya, pp. 43-65.

are away from their homeland. Furthermore, he argues, the Arabs have always acclaimed their classical language, and to them it has remained as the ideal language for poetry and any serious thought. This is not to deny the fact that each tribe has retained its own dialect and has used it in day-to-day life. In view of these facts one cannot be led to believe that classical poetry has lain dormant for more than seven hundred years. 'Alī concludes by saying that classical poetry must have existed long before the 19th century. Although there is no material proof, he maintains that the Arabs must have felt the urge to compose in the classical language right from the early days of their migratory movements into the Sudan.

In the light of this argument one feels more than inclined to agree with M.M. 'Alī. Nonetheless, Dr. 'Abdīn might well be excused for not taking much account of the traditional poems that existed before 1821, as they existed only in fragmentary and incomplete forms and as such they cannot be counted upon as a tangible and an independent literary contribution. As for the authenticity of the colloquial verse, this is a question that can only be settled by those who are now engaged in the study of popular literature.

(ii) Cultural Conditions before the Turkiyya:

The first rays of the Arabic literary renaissance (Nahḍa) which began to be felt in the Lebanon, Syria and Egypt by the early 19th century, and from there spread to the rest of the Arab world, did not filter through to the

Sudan until very late in the 19th century. As far as literary advancement is concerned the Sudan was lagging behind the rest of the Arab world. Many factors peculiar to the country have contributed to this situation.

Geographically, the Sudan lies on the fringes of the Arabic-speaking Muslim world. This made it isolated and cut it off from foreign influences. Further, the absence of virtually any intellectual or cultural activities and modern schools up to the beginning of this century gave it the unique opportunity to develop its own blend of religious, social and linguistic traditions.

Historically, it may be recalled, it was only during the 14th century that the country was overrun by the Muslim Arabs. The Funj kingdom, the first Muslim dynasty in the country, was established at the start of the 16th century. This comparatively recent islamization of the people resulted in a somewhat scanty knowledge of Islam, and despite the impact of its language the adoption of Arabic by the majority of the people took many centuries. The linguistic struggle that took place between Arabic and the local tongues lasted well into the 19th century.

Politically, long before the Turco-Egyptian conquest the Funj Sultanate had been passing through a state of unrest and instability. The petty autocracies which sprang up were divided and hostile to each other. By the end of the first quarter of the 19th century, the country found itself under the grip of the Turkiyya.

The attempts by Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha and the Khedive

Ismā'īl to modernize Egypt did not include the Sudan. Neither the Khedives nor their administrators had any great interest in developing the Sudan culturally or otherwise. It represented a dismal and remote exile for those Egyptian officials who were in disfavour with the authorities in Cairo. Still worse, the notorious corruption of the administrators, their cruel oppression of the people, which included flogging and forced labour, engendered enmity, fear, and misery in the hearts of the inhabitants. This, along with the old Turkish school training in which the administrators were brought up, rendered any genuine attempt at reform futile.

During the short period of the Mahdist state, the Sudan remained secluded and this isolation persisted until the advent of the Condominium.

(iii) Classical Poetry in the Turkiyya Era.

It is possibly unfortunate that traditional poetry in the Sudan took its definitive shape during the Turkiyya, at a time when Arabic poetry in general was at its lowest ebb. Its exponents were the 'Ulamā' who represented that small group of individuals who had managed to pursue their studies at Al-Azhar or one of the religious schools of Mecca. After receiving extensive training in Islamic and Arabic studies they returned to the Sudan and worked as teachers or sharī'a judges. As such, they were government officials whose loyalty to the Turkish administration was assured. They were not in a

position to speak or act against it in public.

Under such circumstances poetry could not be expected to show any signs of vitality. In essence, it was influenced by the traditional mentality of Al-Azhar and its authors could neither share nor express the feelings of the common people. Its course of development is in sharp contrast with that of the classical heritage at large. While the latter started in the jāhilī form, the former was destined to take shape in the Turkish period, inevitably following the Mamlūk and Ottoman models. From these models traditional poetry in the Sudan has gradually moved away, aspiring to emulate the jāhilī and 'Abbāsīd examples.<sup>1</sup>

As far as the themes of this poetry are concerned, they are confined to panegyrics, praise of the Prophet, madīh, elegies and greetings and compliments exchanged on trivial social occasions.

The subject matter of this poetry is limited, highly subjective and shallow in content. The whole poetry can be described as artificial and lacking in sentiment, a description which applies to nearly the entire body of Arabic poetry at the time.

The poem usually opens with a kind of preaching in which the poet alludes to the subject of his poem expressing friendliness, sincerity and counsel. Not

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1. 'Abdīn, Tārīkh, op. cit., p. 218.

unlike the jāhillī poetry, this prelude is meant to impress the reader, (or audience), and the poet is at pains to attain this and eventually embark upon his theme. The art of embarkation (ḥusn at-takhalluṣ) is thus of great importance.

The poem closes with a kind of supplication in which the poet prays for God's blessings on him, his family and relations. The poet's name is included in the last verse with chronograms giving the date of composition under the last hemistich.

#### Social Implications:

The panegyrics, which were generally addressed to the Khedives in Cairo, provide the reader with a glowing picture of the Turco-Egyptian rule. But this picture is by no means a true one, for the vast majority of the inhabitants lived in a state of utter darkness, bewilderment and misery. It can be said, that by writing these panegyrics the 'Ulamā' were serving their own interests, but one cannot describe them as a socially distinct class which was totally alienated from the people as some critics have suggested. The point to stress in this respect is the 'Ulamā' 's narrow conception of poetry and its role in life. They looked upon it as a part-time hobby which had nothing to do with actual life, and which could only be written and appreciated by the learned.

The panegyrics are not profound in meaning and their composers were preoccupied by verbal jugglery and pursuit



of empty figures of speech. Besides this, praises rarely attain a high standard because of lack of concentration. The poet lets his thoughts and ideas wander and does not concentrate on a specific theme which is related to the object of his praise. This sort of distraction has been observed by one scholar who writes, "One common feature of this poetry is its tendency to date the happenings of the time rather than draw a dimensional picture of the one to be praised."<sup>1</sup> He attributes this to the spirit of the age which favoured the collection and memorization of facts and genealogies. Hence more than one person could be included in one panegyric as is the case with Maḥmūd Al-Darīr's eulogy which, <sup>although</sup> ↑ originally meant for Tawfīq Pasha, includes other persons.

It may also be noted that in these panegyrics expressions of praise are usually mixed with those of Ṣūfism, or may be interrupted by a description of a current event, with the ultimate result that the character of the mamdūh is enfeebled and diminished.

As for the madīh, or praises of the Prophet, they are reminiscent of the purely Ṣūfī poetry of the past which dominated the Funj era. As can be expected the prelude of a madīh poem is in most cases based upon wine-description or on a sort of puritanical eroticism. This

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1. Badawī, Al-Shi'r al-Ḥadīth fi'l-Sūdān, Cairo, 1964, p. 311.

is, of course, characteristic of Sūfī poetry in general. Sūfī poets like Al-Buṣṭurī and Aḥmad Al-Rifāʿī, were known to the Sudanese poets and some of their compositions were taken as models and imitated.

Having finished with the prelude, the poet proceeds to praise the Prophet and expresses his love for him. Then he confesses his sins, sheds his tears of regret and asks for forgiveness.

As far as the subject-matter is concerned one might expect these praises to be addressed to the Muslim community at large so that it might share these experiences and feelings. But they were far from being communal. The approach is highly individualistic, and, as if to stress this individualism and privacy, the poet does not forget to include members of his family in the closing section of prayer. Moreover, the praises are lacking in terms of emotional depth.

This is what has rendered this poetry artificial and far from appealing. It is a kind of lyrical poetry in which the poet attempts in a business-like manner to show his love for and attachment to the Prophet. The practical value of this love, or rather of Islam in general, is not brought out. Instead, the poet is carried away in a world of fantasy and romance. It has been noted that the majority of these poems enumerate the miracles performed by the Prophet: the sacred fire that was extinguished in all the temples of Persia at the time of his birth, his communication with animals and objects, his power to heal

the sick and raise the dead. Such descriptions, most of which are fictitious, appeared in the writings of the late Muslim historians under the influence of Jewish and Christian folk-lore.<sup>1</sup>

Main Features:

As far as language and style are concerned the following observations may be made about poetry in the Turkish period:

1. Despite the presence of corrupt and colloquial forms in addition to the frequent grammatical and prosodic errors it is fair to note that the language of this poetry has improved and become more poetic.
2. The poems are laden with linguistic and legal allusions. This comes as no surprise, since Islamic jurisprudence and the Arabic language formed the backbone of the studies of the 'Ulamā'. The fact that, by necessity in their everyday work, they had to practise this knowledge, must have made it too difficult for the poets to resist the inclusion of such terms in their poems.
3. The overwhelming presence of rhetoric. This brings to mind the state of Arabic poetry in general which was still at its lowest ebb during the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. One distinguished scholar writes,

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1. Shoush, Some Background Notes on Modern Sudanese Poetry [Sudan Notes and Records, vol. 44, Khartoum, 1963] pp. 21-42.

"The works of these poets who were popular throughout the first half of the 19th century do not materially differ from those of their predecessors. We encounter the same imitativeness and lack of originality, the same addiction to hyperbole and verbal tricks, the same lack of seriousness..."<sup>1</sup>

In the Sudan the 'Ulamā' kept themselves in touch with the development of Arabic poetry in the Arab world, mainly through Al-Jawā'ib and Al-Waqā'i' al-Misriyya, periodicals which were circulating during that time. They contributed to these papers and some of their poems appeared in them. Hence it is not surprising that they were influenced by what they read and that that influence was reflected in their output. They fell victim to this artificiality and became absorbed in it. Their style was repetitive, highly decorative and imitative.

Muhammad Muḥammad 'Alī has noted that this imitation underlines two important facts: firstly, that the Sudanese poets were no longer bothered by the question of prosody and rhyme and secondly, that the new ideas of Al-Bārūdī had no effect upon them. Furthermore, this imitation, as far as poetry in the Sudan is concerned, is a step in the right direction.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Badawī, A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry, Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 14-15.
  2. M.M. 'Alī, Al-Shi'r al-Sūdānī fi'l-Ma'ārik al-Siyāsiyya, 1969, pp. 92 and 94.

But it is only fair to add that the Sudanese poets were by no means inferior to their counterparts in the rest of the Arab world. Despite its weaknesses and addiction to rhetorical devices some of their poetry surpasses some of the Egyptian examples at that time. An illustration is the panegyric by Al-Amīn Al-Ḍarīr which appeared in Al-Waqāʾiʿ, issue of 18 Jumādā al-Ūlā 1286/26 August, 1869. Fortunately the author of Nafathāt has provided us with the two prose passages which were meant to introduce the poem, the first by the editor of Al-Waqāʾiʿ and the second by the poet himself. A glance at the two paragraphs will convince us of the stylistic superiority of the latter to the former.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the literary award-winning poem by ʿUmar Al-Azharī leaves us in no doubt about the prevailing literary taste and its universality. Al-Shūsh has noted that, despite its overwhelming exaggeration and rhetoric, the poem won the literary competition which was organized by Al-Jawāʾib.<sup>2</sup>

(iv) Classical Poetry in the Mahdist Period:

The output of poetry during the Mahdist State which

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1. See ʿAbd al-Rahīm, Nafathāt, (n.d.), pp. 76-77 and p. 81.
  2. Al-Shūsh, Al-Shiʿr al-Ḥadīth fiʾl-Sūdān, 2nd ed. (revised), 1971, p. 27.

started in 1885 was relatively small. This might seem contrary to expectation at a time of excitement and great upheavals, especially so in view of the opposition of the 'Ulamā' to the Mahdist ideas. The Mahdī relied heavily upon the psychological war of propaganda which found expression in his promulgations and warnings to the people as well as in poetry. In any case, it seems that it was the fanatical anṣār, the disciples of Al-Mahdī who seized the chance to voice their new ideals and beliefs in poetry. The opposing 'Ulamā' must have been frightened off by the enthusiasm of the anṣār and their surprising victories over the authorities.

Traditional poetry continued to pursue the same path with slight variations. The panegyrics are now designed to suit the situation, but the amatory and wine-description preludes have been retained. In the closing verses the poet's prayer is for God's blessing on the Mahdī and not himself or his family.

Alongside the panegyrics new themes have been introduced. These include songs of courage and heroism, boasting and defamation of enemies or disbelievers, along with battle descriptions.

The Mahdiyya was a new world state - the rule of God on earth. Those who denied the claims of the Mahdī were branded as disbelievers in God and His Apostle.<sup>1</sup> In all

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1. Na'ūm Shuqayr, Jughrāfiyyat wa-Tārīkh al-Sūdān, III, p. 123.

his letters Muḥammad Aḥmad brings forward visions of the Prophet and saints as the main proof of his mission. The jihād, i.e. holy struggle, was given priority and with it was linked the idea of liqā' bi 'l-Lāh, literally meaning meeting with God, which gave such great confidence to the anṣār. In a vision the Prophet told Muḥammad Aḥmad that all his warriors would be welcomed by God in the world to come. In the light of all this the Mahdī set to work strenuously to reform the morals and revolutionize the customs of the Sudanese.

These were the main new ideals of the Mahdiyya which poetry was required to reflect and propagate, and it can safely be said that despite its limitations and incapacities, it succeeded in that objective with varying degrees. Describing the impact of the Mahdist idea on poetry one literary scholar writes, "It awakened it to reality and introduced into it the element of enthusiasm, songs of heroism, war and courage."<sup>1</sup> Poetry became an important public weapon and, to borrow Al-Shūsh's expression, "The long stagnant water of poetry began to move and rush along, after many arid seasons." The people were incited to join the holy struggle and the battlefields that witnessed the Mahdists' sweeping victories were vividly described.

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1. Shoush, Some Background Notes on Modern Sudanese Poetry, op. cit., p. 23.

Poetry has certainly achieved much progress and signs of maturity have begun to appear. One important element is that of enthusiasm and patriotism which sprang out of the poet's overwhelming sympathy for the Mahdī and his cause. As a result poetry became more vital and exciting. The most celebrated and memorable poem in this respect is that of Muḥammad 'Umar Al-Bannā with its fiery opening verse:

War is patience, and combat is endurance,  
And death for the sake of God is a renewed life.

Closely associated with this is the element of imagination, one of the essentials of poetry which has long been missing.

Among those who excelled there is little evidence of rhetoric, though traces of linguistic and fiḡh expressions can still be found. A new stylistic device known as tarṣī', i.e. the grouping of words in a rhythmic manner in such a way as to produce harmonic sounds, has appeared.<sup>1</sup> In contrast with the argumentative nature of the Mahdī's prose, poetry has developed a descriptive and narrative approach.

Description and narration were not entirely limited to the actions and happenings of the time. There was, of course, that great world of eschatology which was enhanced

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1. M. M. 'Alī, Al-Shi'r al-Sūdānī, op. cit., p. 186.



by the Mahdī's continuous revelations and visions. The rule of God on earth could only be restored through His representative, the Mahdī, who is quoted as having said, "The Prophet said to me, 'You are created from the light of the inmost depth of my heart.'"<sup>1</sup> All this testifies to the fact that the spiritual side was a predominant factor in the Mahdist idea. Hence, the greater part of this poetry was overshadowed by this spirituality and the poets were swept away into a world of millenarian mythology.

Finally, the language of this poetry has become richer and more poetic than in the Turkish period. It contains many of the essentials of poetry; and the poets are now able to convey certain ideas to their readers, in a fairly correct and sometimes beautiful language. It is also worth noting the presence of an overwhelming emotion which has been reflected in elegies on the Mahdī.

But, on the whole, poetry is by no means immaculate. A great deal of it is weak and unappealing. This is mainly because the majority of those who tried to write poetry neither had the competence nor the disposition. They were moved by enthusiasm and excitement, rather than poetic potential; and at a time of great upheavals this is not uncommon.

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1. Shughayr, Jughrāfiyyat wa-Tārīkh al-Sūdān, III, p. 122.

## SECTION C

### The Modern Era

#### (i) The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan:

##### (a) Political Development:

The advent of Anglo-Egyptian rule in the Sudan marks a turning point in the country's modern history. With the firm establishment of the new regime the inhabitants were brought under an organized system of government for the first time. They felt secure from warring factions within and exploitation without. Through its contacts with Western civilization, the country began to make adaptations in the administrative, economic, intellectual and social spheres of life. True the impact of these adaptations on Sudanese life could not be felt in the early stages, but there was a gradual build up over the years and by the 1930s signs of this change had become evident.

In the early days the administration was somewhat rudimentary and was run on military lines. When the inhabitants had been pacified the authorities turned their attention to reconstruction and maintenance of law and order. The outbreak of World War I enhanced the growing tendency to separate the administrative from the military branches of the government. Following the precedents of the Turkiyya and Mahdiyya, the country was divided into a number of provinces.

It was implied in the Condominium Agreement that the Sudan was to be regarded as a province of Egypt and the former, it was stipulated, was to follow the guidance of the Agent and Consul-General in Cairo in important matters. This principle of supervision and control from Cairo, which was strongly advocated by Lord Cromer, was thus adhered to and the two countries were regarded as units of the same dominion.

The outbreak of the First World War necessitated that this policy be reversed, for the Ottoman Sultan, of whom the Khedive was merely a vassal, had joined the Central Powers. Britain promptly declared Egypt a British protectorate. The feelings of resentment in Egypt were steadily growing and culminated in the 1919 Revolution. This, coupled with the increased danger of Sudanese pan-Islamic sentiment and fraternal feelings with Egypt made it expedient for the British to put an end to the existing relationship between the Sudan and Egypt. The former was quickly removed from the jurisdiction of the proposed Egyptian parliament.

A short-lived period of 'Sudanization' followed and some Sudanese were recruited to replace the Egyptian personnel in the administration. Great numbers of agriculturists, engineers and telegraphists were also trained. In 1922 it became possible to provide the necessary funds and proceed with the development of the Gash Delta and the Jezira Scheme, a step that proved to be of great significance in the economic history of the

country.

The 1924 military rising - better known as the White League Movement - by a Sudanese battalion dealt a fatal blow to the process of 'Sudanization' which was not in any case viewed with any real enthusiasm by the British authorities. Only the fact that the rising was a manifestation of Sudanese national awakening as well as an expression of solidarity with the Egyptian Revolution can account for the repercussions, within and without the Sudan, that followed. All the purely Egyptian units of the army were evacuated to Egypt where Sir Lee Stack, the Sirdār and Governor-General, had been murdered. The Sudan Force was set up after taking an oath of allegiance to the Governor-General instead of the King of Egypt.

The authorities took fright, and reacted with unprecedented violence. Relations between the government and the small educated class, who were now regarded as the enemy of the British, became worse than ever, and a period of mistrust, hostility and bitterness ensued which lasted well into the 1930s. In the decade which followed the rising not a single school was opened in the north. It was in the south that the administration began to take interest in education. Many non-Arabic and Christian schools were set up in close co-operation with the Christian Missions. Training courses for Sudanese administrators were discontinued, the Military College closed down and the sending of students to the American University of Beirut - a practice that was

started in 1922 in order to avoid the infectious nationalistic spirit in Egypt - was stopped.

Native administration which was primarily introduced as complementary to the policy of training educated Sudanese for service in the hierarchy of the central government was now looked upon as an alternative to the employment of educated Sudanese. As such, it was vigorously pursued from 1926 onwards. In his annual report that year the Governor-General stated his conviction that under the impulse of new ideas and with the rise of a new generation, however, tribal organization, tribal sanctions, and old traditions tended 'to crumble away unless they are fortified betimes.'<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, tribalism was encouraged, sub-mamūr courses were abolished in 1927 and in the same year<sup>the</sup> Powers of Sheikhs Ordinance was passed to give certain administrative responsibilities and more judicial powers to the tribal chiefs.

(b) Modern Education:

Another important development was the introduction of the modern system of education in the Sudan. Government education was suspect at first, but its importance and material benefits were soon recognized, especially by the town population.

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1. 'Abd al-Rahīm, Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan, Oxford, 1969, p. 68.

The great importance of the Gordon Memorial College as a centre around which the educational system was built lay not only in the fact that during the early years and for a long time to come it remained the major educational institution in the Sudan but also in that its graduates were the main recipients of European culture and civilization. Though the college was officially opened in 1902, its buildings were completed in 1903. It incorporated the existing training courses in Omdurman and the Khartoum primary school in addition to a new technical centre. In 1905 a secondary course for the provision of general education and engineering courses was started.<sup>1</sup> In the following year another four-year secondary course was added to train primary school teachers. Admission to these secondary courses was only for those who had completed the primary school.

The college thus became a centre for advanced training and supplied the administration with the clerical, technical and teaching personnel it needed.

A network of primary schools in the main towns was begun. In 1906 two primary schools were opened in Berber and Wad Medani, in addition to the four schools in Omdurman, Khartoum, Sawākin and Ḥalfā, with the number of primary school pupils totalling 762. From the very start the administration kept itself well aware of the consequences

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1. M.O. Beshir, Educational Development in the Sudan, Oxford, 1969, p. 44.

of creating an educated and unemployed class, and accordingly the number of boys admitted was limited to those who were likely to be required for the Gordon College advanced courses or for minor government posts. It is not surprising then, that in 1914 the number of primary school attendance did not exceed 787.<sup>1</sup>

The demand for education, especially at the primary level, was growing, and in many provinces the citizens willingly agreed to pay an additional tax to meet the increase in educational expenses. By 1918 there were 73 schools and the number of pupils rose to 6,086, compared with 1,280 in 1907.<sup>2</sup> The Arabic language was the medium of instruction in elementary schools, where as the teaching of English was restricted to the primary and secondary stages. In the latter, i.e. the Gordon Memorial College, English was eventually adopted as the medium of instruction and the first batch to have been instructed and brought up in it graduated in 1912.<sup>3</sup>

Traditional teaching which so far had been going on on a private basis or at the Omdurman mosque witnessed an important development in 1912, when the authorities

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1. M.O. Beshir, Educational Development in the Sudan, Oxford, 1969, p. 44.
  2. Ibid., p. 45.
  3. Hasan Najjla, Malāmiḥ min al-Mujtama' al-Sūdānī, Khartoum, 1972, p. 15.

agreed to re-organize and develop the Omdurman mosque ma'had under the headship of the Shaykh Abu 'l-Qāsim Ahmad Hāshim. The necessary regulations were laid down and the studies at the ma'had were divided into three coordinated stages each leading to a certificate. Unlike the Gordon College the curricula were not geared towards government service or needs. The main objective of the ma'had was to produce a class of 'Ulamā' and preachers capable of enlightening the Muslim community. It grew into an institution of considerable size with a substantial government grant. Soon it was held in high esteem and came to be regarded as the central religious institution for the whole Sudan.

Missionary schools, too, had their part to play in modern education. Although the Christian outlook and objectives remained predominant in these schools, many Muslim pupils, especially girls, were attracted to them through the tactful educational approach that was adopted by the staff.<sup>1</sup>

(c) New Changes and Adaptations:

Egypt's social and cultural influence had steadily grown with the development of Sudanese nationalism. Most

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1. The history of missionary teaching dates back to the Turco-Egyptian rule, and it was first resumed in Khartoum in 1902.



conspicuous was its domination in the sphere of the arts. During the second and third decades of the 20th century Egyptian writings remained the main inspiration for Sudanese poets and writers. Cairo, the intellectual Mecca of the Sudan, was pouring out a flood of newspapers, magazines and modern and religious literature. The educated in the Sudan devoured whatever reached them with great enthusiasm and eagerness. The currents of thought and intellectual disintegration and adjustments caused by the impact of Western ideas on Islam could all be felt among the educated Sudanese in coffee-houses as well as at private gatherings. Haykal's 'Life of Muḥammad', the works of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, the biting criticism and absorbing analytic essays by Al-'Aqqād were eagerly read. All this had its immediate effect and some of the educated began to drift away from their conventional beliefs.

Along with the printed material there came to the Sudan Egyptian films and theatrical groups. The news of such visiting troupes appeared in Al-Fajr along with reviews of films and shows.

Moreover, Egypt, in some ways, bridged the gap between the cultural and social life of the Sudan and that of Europe. It was under Egyptian tutelage that a fully conscious literary movement emerged, and, as with the greater Arab awakening in Syria, it was accompanied by a political ferment.

These new adaptations enabled the people of the Sudan to gain a wider outlook. New possibilities, including the

development of motor and railway transport and telecommunications, entered their life and gave them a wider conception of the world. Though the fekis still retained their place as teachers and oracles, the cafes and other excitements, like gambling and the cinema, had found their way to the big towns. Certain tastes were modernized through greater prosperity and new amenities like tea and sugar became necessities in life. Old customs which were out of gear with new economic facts gradually began to disappear. The tension between the educated and uneducated began to show clearly by the beginning of the 1930s. It took the form of lack of understanding between the generations, a loss of authority on the part of the older people over the younger generation and a tendency for the less mature of the educated elite to acquire habits of intellectual arrogance.

The penal and criminal codes which were introduced in 1899, along with the native courts, and the traditional Islamic Shari'a law which was retained in personal matters, helped to inculcate in the people a sense of law. A far-reaching development in this respect was the legalization of prostitution. Cathedrals and churches soon became a familiar sight in the main towns, and the predominantly Muslim population had to put up with the realities of life and adopt a tolerant attitude towards the Christian minority. The number of foreigners steadily increased and distinct residential areas for each community emerged.

The economic centre of gravity moved to cities and

big towns, and hence for many individuals the chances of making a living or seeking a fortune lay outside the small community. Many insignificant villages had grown into market towns. The proclaimed commercial policy of the 'open door' in the Sudan meant that the sphere of trade and commerce was securely reserved for the foreigners. Syrians, Indians, Copts, Armenians and Greeks dominated the scene with their entirely different cultural, social and moral values.

(11) Later Development in Classical Arabic Poetry:

Let us at this juncture turn our attention to the development of poetry in the Sudan. It can safely be said that traditional poets were stunned by the turn of events during the early period that followed the final defeat of the Mahdist troops at Kararī. Not a single verse that commemorates the Mahdist cause or grieves for the downfall of the Khalifa has come down to us. This is partly due to the feelings of disappointment and bewilderment that befell the people at large after what had seemed a final victory for the Revolution over its enemies, but mainly because of the poets' unsympathetic attitude towards the Khalifa and his 'people'. The poets, it is to be remembered, originally came from among the sedentary villagers, better known as the 'awlād al-Balad' who lived along the Nile and with whom the reign of the Khalifa was highly unpopular.<sup>1</sup>

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1. M.M. 'Alī, Al-Shi'r al-Sūdānī, op. cit., p. 307.

It was a time of perplexity, and the poets felt at a loss. They reverted to their former state of apathy and after a short while they resumed their Prophetic compositions. Nearly every 'ālim or faqīh managed to compile a dīwān comprising his eulogies on the Prophet. Mingled with the mystical cliches was the poets' feeling of pessimism and estrangement. Hence poetry was once more reduced to its ceremonial and negligible function.

This state of affairs persisted until the 1920s when a newly educated generation had emerged. They were mainly the first graduates of the Gordon Memorial College who had received a kind of secular education based on religious lines. Their instructors were Azhar graduates. Because of their religious background they are commonly known as the 'first generation' as distinct from the 'second or younger generation' of the college. The first generation were not reconciled to the new civilization. From their experience in public life and through their contacts with the Arab world in general and Egypt in particular they gained a wider outlook. As far as Arabic literature is concerned the literary renaissance movement was in full swing and at the hands of the neoclassicists - Ḥāfiz Ibrāhīm and Aḥmad Shawqī in Egypt, Jamāl Ṣidqī Al-Zahāwī, Ma'rūf Al-Ruṣāfī and Mahdī Al-Jawāhirī in Iraq and Bishāra Al-Khūrī in Lebanon - classical poetry was revived, elevated to great heights and made once more relevant to life. It is with these revivalists or neoclassicists that the traditional poets in the Sudan ,

lead by the 'first generation', can best be associated.

The neoclassicists:

By the early 1920s traditional poetry in the Sudan had firmly established itself. With the gradual spread of education people began to take a keen interest in Arabic literature, and poetry came to be recognized as a noble product of the mind which was appreciated as a high accomplishment and regarded as a qualification for exaltation of rank and esteem in society. The Graduates' Club at Omdurman, which was founded in 1918, became a literary shrine to which poets and orators came to emulate and vie with one another to carry off the palm. The club was thronged by big crowds from the Three Towns who might have considered it another 'Ukāz where poets resorted and placed their poetic talents before the public for their enjoyment as well as for their judgement and commendation.

This is not unnatural in a country whose people have always been noted for their love for rhythm and song and where poetry remained the sole literary form of expression in classical Arabic. Further, the greater esteem and popularity which traditional poetry had come to enjoy from the 1920s onwards might be explained by the captivating nature of that poetry which was, and still is, best suited to the social life of the people. A predominant feature of that life is the community spirit which underlies every aspect of it. Whatever befalls the individual, be it joy or sorrow, success or failure, the community at large

voluntarily participates in it. In such a community social convention stipulates that the strong and powerful speak for the weak and less strong, the wise for the less experienced, the old for the young, and the enlightened for the ignorant. Another feature is a deeply-rooted belief in Islam, and the strong - if inflammable - feelings which the Sudanese people have about religion. It was against this background that the traditionalists began to write poetry and set themselves up as teachers and moral guides for their society.

Through their tendency towards an emotional expression of patriotic and social themes, they reached a wider public, and with their relatively imposing standards of refinement in structure and style, correctness and good sense, the poetic language was revived and the dying aesthetic sensibility was revitalized.

Neoclassical poetry in the Sudan ruled supreme till the mid-thirties, and everything of public importance from the opening of a masjid (mosque) or a school to the anniversary of the Prophet's birth was greeted with a spate of poems. The poets became the spokesmen of their community and their dominance was so great that their works were conceived of as unmistakable revelations.<sup>1</sup>

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1. H. Najīla in his Malāmiḥ relates that when one of the young critics spoke disapprovingly of 'Abd Allāh M. 'Umar Al-Bannā, one of the outstanding traditional poets, an enthusiast responded by attempting to throw a chair at the speaker in protest. See Malāmiḥ, p. 158

The supremacy of traditional poetry was stressed by a young critic in the 1930s, who observed that it was difficult to change the public literary taste because of the people's stagnant mental environment and a rigidity which was irreconcilable with anything new. Hence classical poetry had been, and still remained, favourite with the public taste.<sup>1</sup>

The seriousness and frequency with which the poets played their new social role must have enhanced traditional poetry and rendered it all the more commanding and glamorous. Apart from the spontaneous excitement and joy it gave to the audience, its effect was a lasting one. Poems such as 'Damascus', 'Venus' and 'Communing with the Crescent' have been cherished over the years up to the present time. True the subjects of this poetry range far and wide, and to a certain extent its function might be likened to that of the modern newspaper; but because it is poetry written in a flexible and very rich language, its effect was far greater than that of any prose writing.

The main achievement of Al-Bārūdī and the neoclassicists who followed in his footsteps was to revive and renew Arabic literature, especially poetry, its subtlest and most congenial form. Firstly, poetry had to be freed from the artificiality and false archaism it had been plunged into for centuries. Secondly, a genuine poetic taste along with

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1. Muḥammad 'Ashrī Al-Ṣiddīq, Al-Nahḍa, (1931-2), issue no. 11, p. 9.

a better command of the language had to be acquired, and to do so poets had to turn to the rich Arabic tradition and the great heritage of the 'Abbāsids. Only in these works could they find sound literary rules and standards of judgement. The traditionalists were then required to follow the examples of the past and model their works on them. Though the classical tradition was their main inspiration, the neoclassicists hoped that through creative imitation they would be able to reflect the problems and preoccupations of their society on the one hand, and place their work within the context of the larger Arabic tradition on the other.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the predominant theme of this poetry is the return to the past. It was a call to the Arabs to cast off their apathy, reassert themselves and carve out for themselves a respected place in the modern world instead of being swept away by the tide of that encroaching and suspect Western civilization. In the glorious past of the Muslim Arabs there was always something to be proud of and cling to.

As might be expected, the neoclassicists in the Sudan took part in every social or religious event in order to display their talents and skills and convey their social message which was a reflection of their own observations about the behaviour and attitudes of the people. This could best be done through idealization and parallelism. A bright and ideal picture of the past would be drawn at first then contrasted with that of the dim and gloomy



present. Having drawn this contrast as vigorously as he possibly could, the poet then concluded by pleading to the public to mend their wicked ways and realize the dangers which might befall society did they not awaken in time to revive and revitalize their life.

The poets were in search of an ideal hero who would embody high ideals and standards of behaviour, and it was only natural that the Prophet was their choice, and next to him his Companions. The evocation of that latent religious feeling was best suited to their declamatory poetry which had the greatest effect when recited or read aloud.

The qaṣīdas of the traditionalists were predominantly classical and they were alike in form and content. In order to be linked with the past the poet was in need of a medium which would take him back in time. One common device was to choose a drinking companion or a cup-bearer and to ask him in due course to relate events from the glorious past. Another means was to listen to a singing bird that would echo the past. But it was the crescent moon (hilāl) which was favourite with the poets, 'since it was the one object that may be said to have actually witnessed the past and have once shone upon the great Arab civilization.'<sup>1</sup>

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1. Shoush, Some Background Notes, op. cit., p. 25.

The path of the classics was faithfully followed, and the form of the ancient qaṣīda with its lengthiness, monometre, monorhyme and lack of organic unity, was retained. But one has to be reminded not to mistake the descriptions of the environment and the hardships of travel or the poet's pride in his mount that might be contained in Sudanese poetry of this period for a slavish adoption of the classical model. The people of the Sudan did travel by camel and the animals and scenery that might be observed or described by the poet, were not dissimilar to those of Arabia. Like the ancient poets he too would address his audience from a high platform at the Graduates' Club and like their Arab ancestors the Sudanese people listened to poetry with rapt attention. To them poetry represented one of the very few entertainments which were available at the time.

As for the language, it is in conformity with the social and didactic nature of this poetry. It is sonorous, declamatory and rhetorical. The style is grand and magniloquent, the idioms those of classical Arabic. The Sudanese poet had much of the conservative about him, and he took it upon himself to stand firm against any attempt at literary innovation, so much so that the modernists were often accused of unfaithfulness and disloyalty to the mother-tongue, the language of the Qur'ān. Hence the wordiness and poetic diction of their poetry was on the whole a continuation of the scholastic tradition. In seeking to lift the hearts of their audience, the poets

were more than aware of their artistry and skill and it is no wonder that they excelled as masters of rhetoric and the art of persuasion.

Finally, if one is to consider the conclusions at which the poets arrive, it is to be noted that on the whole these conclusions do not seem convincing or satisfactory answers to the present-day reader. This is perhaps mainly because of sweeping generalizations which neither pin-point the ills of the community nor provide a cure for them. But one has to be reminded of a number of facts pertaining to the function and approach of this poetry. Firstly, the main objective of the poets was to condemn and censure the community's vices and failings as such. The important thing to them was not the failings of individuals but qualities or vice in general. It therefore follows that whoever behaved dishonourably or immorally deserved to be disgraced and attacked. Secondly, because of the repressive policy of the government the poets had to disguise and generalize their attacks, especially so when they realized that the authorities were determined to revive tribalism and maintain the religious feuds which were going on. This policy necessitated the endearment and protection of the religious leaders and notables by the government.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, there are many

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1. Ḥasan Najīla relates that Al-Sharīf Yūsuf Al-Hindī was so much offended by Al-Bannā's fiery poem that he decided to take the poet to court. See Malāmih, p. 86.

expressions of nationalism which are implicitly included in the qasīdas of the neoclassicists. The passing of good days of youth, for instance, and many other nostalgic allusions which are seemingly signs of that return to the past can be taken to mean the youth of the Sudan, or the loss of its freedom and identity. Such allusions are inevitable ingredients in political revival and the spread of nationalism. One informed contemporary source relates that in many of their qasīdas the poets meant to create and foster national consciousness and in most cases they did this implicitly.<sup>1</sup>

It may be concluded that on the whole this poetry had no tangible effect on the attitudes of the people, who, despite their fervent applause, continued to do as they wished. But it is of equal importance to add that in their compositions the poets were not genuinely moved by social or moralistic motives. It is not fair to assume that they were committed moralists or educationists and view their poetry in this light. They were great lovers of poetry. The inclusion of morals and other behavioural attitudes was in most cases meant to add to the flavour and excitement of their poetry. This is why the power of this poetry lies in its directness and expressiveness of things seen and observed, not in the poet's own subjective visions but in the outside world.

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1. Malāmiḥ, pp. 10, 71 and 73.

It is agreed that in literature each age has its own sensibility and expectations with regard to poetry. In the light of what has been said it may safely be concluded that the Sudanese traditionalists or neo-classicists who dominated the literary scene from the 1920s up to the 30s succeeded in giving an adequate expression of the preoccupations and problems of their time within the framework of the classical qaṣīda. The Arabic language was revived and poetry revitalized.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERARY ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF THE FAJR GROUP

By the 1920s the development of political and literary consciousness was well under way. As far as the political aspect is concerned it may suffice to mention that it culminated in the 1924 Movement, 'Ḥarakat al-liwā' al-Abyad'. Exactly ten years after that movement a fully conscious literary movement came into being. Most representative of it is the Fajr group, whose organ the magazine Al-Fajr was launched on Saturday the 2nd of June, 1934 as the literary embodiment of the Sudanese younger generation.

This ten-year-lapse between the two developments is worthy of note. It can be accounted for by the difference in nature between the two. The political development was essentially an immediate reaction to the government's policies and as such it had much to do with the temperament and psychology of the people of the Sudan at large. The 1924 Movement was a response to powerful popular sentiments and emotions which had been ready to erupt ever since the 1919 Revolution in Egypt. For this reason it came about with little prior warning or political developments. The literary development, on the other hand, required a longer time because it was basically an intellectual process which could only be crystalized through the cultivation and training of the mind.

It is to the literary movement that this chapter will

be devoted. We shall first attempt to trace the cultural and literary sources of the members of Al-Fajr, then explain and analyse the evolutionary factors which led to the formation of the Group and the subsequent emergence of their magazine.

A. The Literary Origins of the Group

(i) Cultural and Educational Background:

The cultural makeup of the Group derives from two major sources; domestic and foreign. By domestic is meant the Group's readings in Arabic in general and the Egyptian writings of the 1920s and 30s in particular. The foreign source was mainly the English language with which the members acquainted themselves, and from which they gained a general knowledge of Western culture and deepened their understanding of English literature.

The emphasis laid on these two sources should by no means suggest however, that the importance of the locally acquired knowledge gained either through formal education at school or by way of encouragement and motivation from the aliens who were particularly interested in Sudanese culture and history can be dismissed.

The impact of Egyptian culture on the Sudan's younger generation during the second and third decades of this century has already been alluded to in the previous chapter. In that chapter it was also claimed that Egypt seemed to have bridged the cultural gap between the West and the

Sudan. It is our intention here to survey these Egyptian writings as well as the English readings which seem to have influenced the Group most. The revitalizing force of foreign literature along with the rediscovered springs of thought within the Arabic heritage are mainly responsible for moulding the literary talents of the Group.

Throughout the 1920s and 30s the younger generation in the Sudan seemed totally absorbed in Egyptian writings. The interest in Egypt's printed material was universal. Thus the elite, particularly those who were literary-minded, kept abreast with the literary movement in Egypt and the Arab world. From time to time they even contributed to the Egyptian press.

One of the prominent members of Al-Fajr who has shown constant awareness of the importance of Egyptian and foreign culture in shaping and directing the literary movement in the Sudan is M.A. Maḥjūb. He observed that "the younger generation in this country, especially those who emerged after the 1924 Revolution realized how great their need for the increase in general knowledge was. The first step they took was to read almost all Egyptian printed material."<sup>1</sup> Yet he was not unaware of the fact that Egyptian literature was a blend of many facets of Western culture. Among the younger generation of the Sudan there were students of economic and political sciences who managed to read many

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1. M.A. Maḥjūb, Al-Haraka al-Fikriyya, p. 20.



books in English. There were also those who had a keen interest in the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of English with a view to introducing some of them into the literary form of Arabic as was the practice in the rest of the Arab world.

The great esteem which Egypt came to enjoy as the acclaimed leader in the field of Arabic literature was neither accidental nor exaggerated. The Group, for its part, was fully aware of the factors which contributed to Egypt's position. Its unique geographical situation at the meeting-point of three Arab regions makes her politically influential. For many centuries she had enjoyed a cultural pre-eminence since the Fatimids made Cairo the centre for the sciences of Islam and <sup>the</sup> Arabic language. In the 19th century Egypt became the first Arab country to begin adopting institutions characteristic of the modern world. In view of the fact that the new literary stimulus which came from the West needed a solid foundation in the past, Cairo was best suited to become the centre for the literary revival which was in full swing by the 1920s and 30s.

There is, of course, the very special relationship between Egypt and the Sudan which consolidates the literary affinity between the two countries. Apart from the actual political tie which bound the two of them, there has always been that stronger bond of neighbourliness and brotherhood, a kind of sentiment which is constantly highlighted by the often-used epithet shatray al-wādī, i.e. the two parts of the Nile valley. By virtue of these special ties the

Sudanese must have felt that they had - and still have - a legitimate right to the Egyptian literary heritage both for guidance and inspiration.

Technically, and in terms of literary merits the Sudanese found themselves lagging far behind Egypt and the rest of the Arab world. During the first quarter of this century there was hardly any Sudanese literary publication of significance. The poetic collections that were published were compiled by enterprising non-Sudanese residents. In view of this lack of Sudanese literary contribution at the time it was inevitable that the younger generation should rely heavily on Egypt's literary output. The fact that most of the few writers of outstanding genius happened to be Egyptians must have enhanced the reputation of Egypt among the younger generation and increased their eagerness for its printed material.

Furthermore, Egyptian newspapers, periodicals and books, were abundantly available to the thirsty readers in the provincial cities and towns of the Sudan. The young devoured whatever reached them with great enthusiasm and eagerness. Taking all that into account it would not be unjustified to claim that in a sense the Sudanese readers represented an integral part of the reading public in Egypt.

The group of Al-Fajr who were naturally disposed to the arts and literature found the Egyptian writings most fascinating. In order to enlighten themselves and get to grips with the literary questions that might be raised they had to read and digest almost every line contained in these

papers, periodicals and books. As has been observed by one member of the Group they were 'addicted' to the habit of reading in those formative days.

Now that this very special cultural relationship between Egypt and the rising generation in the Sudan has been established, let us examine more closely the impact of Egypt on the Group and the writers who played a particularly influential role in shaping and directing their talents. "The younger generation," writes Maḥjūb, "have benefited from Egyptian literature especially from the writings of Dr. Ṭaḥā Ḥusayn, Dr. Zakī Mubārak and Dr. M. Ḥusayn Haykal, the representatives of the new Egyptian University, as well as from the self-educated literary giants 'Abbās Maḥmūd Al-'Aqqād and Al-Māzinī. The result of all this was reflected in the appreciable improvement in style and method of research."<sup>1</sup> To the Group, such writers and others had opened the doors to the wider world of literature. From the Egyptian writings the members of Al-Fajr were provided with guidance and direction which proved to be most valuable and inspiring in their formative years. In Egypt's press many issues and areas of interest in Western literature were brought to light. The Egyptian writers began to take an ever increasing interest in the romantic movement in the West

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1. Maḥjūb, Al-Ḥaraka al-Fikriyya, op. cit., p. 31.

with particular emphasis on the English romantics whose works were extensively discussed and translated. This was closely followed by the young literary devotees of Al-Fajr. With such literary giants as Al-'Aqqād, Ṭahā Ḥusayn and Haykal dominating the scene of Arabic letters there could be no doubt that the younger members would fall under the spell of modernism and romanticism.

The fact that most members of the Group graduated from the Gordon Memorial College must have greatly enhanced their chances of a better acquaintance with English literature and Western culture in general. Although the College represented the culminating point of education, academically speaking, it was only regarded as the equivalent of a secondary school.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the Western method had been introduced and the study of English was receiving special attention. The graduates themselves took much pride in being proficient in English, which was a pre-requisite for any promotion. Such proficiency is reflected very clearly in the writings of the Group.<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that the Al-Fajr editorials were translated into English as from vol. 1, issue no. 19 onwards.

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1. The School of Engineering was an integral institution in the College and connected with it, though apart from it, was the Kitchener School of Medicine.
  2. See, for example, Furāwī's article on education, Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue no. 4, pp. 101-4 or Muḥammad 'Ashrī Al-Ṣiddīq's 'A Memorandum on Education', Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue no. 3, pp. 65-71.

Of his bid for a better and higher education, with recognized certificates, one member of the Group wrote, "I have tried to sit for the Matriculation Examination and can dare to say that my College standard was not well below that of the Matriculation especially in English, mathematics and mechanics."<sup>1</sup> The younger generation felt that they had a unique responsibility towards their country at that difficult and important juncture in its modern history. "Our generation," writes the editor of Al-Fajr, "is the living articulated position of Young Sudan. We aspire to distinguish ourselves by having an outlook on life: political, social and literary."<sup>2</sup> Further, the rising generation came to the conclusion that much effort should be directed to learning and serious thinking. A knowledge of the political history of the world as well as scientific understanding of Sudanese society were among the requirements which were thought necessary for the development of the new Sudan. In the existing educational institutions there was no provision of such a kind of education. Thus the younger generation were left with two choices: either to migrate to Egypt, and in a few instances, Beirut, in order to attain

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue no. 4, p. 102.

2. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue no. 21, p. 1019, June, 1935.  
(English editorial).

cultural maturity or stay at home and rely on their own efforts. For practical and political considerations most members of Al-Fajr chose to stay at home, and their knowledge of the English language was a key factor in a better understanding of the modern world and its thoughts and culture. In five of the six courses which were conducted at the College as from 1924 onward the English language was taught as a compulsory subject for the first two years of study. In most cases it was taken throughout the courses.

In any case, one cannot assume that the Group's knowledge of English literature and Western culture was entirely gained through formal education. Indeed there is no evidence to suggest that the teaching of English at the College was of an exceptionally high standard. But it was their teachers of English who gave them great encouragement and provided them with the necessary impetus to go deeper in their study of English literature. Among those who are best remembered are the names of Mr. Thomas and Mr. Paton. There are members of the Group who can still recall with awe the way in which Mr. Paton used to recite Ulysses and The Lotus Eaters to his bewitched students. The text books included Selections from Shakespeare, A Book of English Verse, The English Library, and English Grammar and Composition.<sup>1</sup> John O'London's Weekly and The Spectator

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1. 'Abd Allāh 'Ashrī Al-Şiddīq, Recorded Interview, Omdurman, December, 1977.

were also provided to the students for outside reading. There were some students who even ordered books from England. Special attention was paid to composition writing. Maḥjūb relates how they [the students of the Gordon Memorial College] were fascinated by the oratory of the newly-appointed Governor General, John Maffey, when he visited the College sometime late in the 1920s. Following that visit their teachers asked them to write a composition subject based on an extract from the visitor's fascinating speech.<sup>1</sup>

It is worth noting that the Group were so keen on extending and deepening their knowledge of Western literature that some of them embarked upon the task of learning French, but the college authorities forbade them from realizing such an ambition. 'Arafāt, the leader of the Group, was proficient in English and French. Many of the Group went so far in pursuit of Western culture that they were influenced by Western ideas and imageries; this was reflected in their writings.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, their knowledge of English literature can

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1. Maḥjūb and 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, Mawt Dunyā, 1941, pp. 134-5.

2. See Maḥjūb, Al-Ḥaraka, pp. 21-22.

in no way be described as complete or systematic. But given the fact that most members of Al-Fajr were addicted to the habit of reading, and in view of their temperament and calibre, that far from complete knowledge was absorbed by an intellegent and enthusiastic coterie of literary devotees who were able to elaborate on it, adapt it and, in due course, make a most valuable contribution to the development of modern Sudanese literature.

(ii) Literary Sources:

Let us now take a closer look at the Group's literary origins, by tracing the works, both in Arabic and English, to which they had access and which are thought to have influenced their outlook on life and literature. At the outset it should be stressed that it is not the present writer's intention to carry out a detailed survey of every book or article which the members happened to read. The task of identifying the cultural and literary sources by name is of a most cumbersome nature. But certain factors have made the job less difficult. Firstly, the Group's members were essentially a study group which gathered and broke up several times. Not only did the members represent a group of like-minded literary devotees, but also they used to exchange books and reading materials. This they called 'mutual learning' (al-iṭṭilā' al-mushtarak). Secondly, there was a scarcity of books at that time. There was only one book shop in Khartoum which used to cater for the needs of literary and academic-minded people. Even when inter-



esting books were available they were often too expensive to buy.<sup>1</sup> Hence the literary sources were limited in number, and it became necessary for the Group to exchange books. Thirdly, in their writings there are instances in which the members have referred to the same book or books.

(a) Arabic Sources:

Of the Arabic newspapers and periodicals which the Group regularly read the following may be cited:

1. Al-Siyāsa al-Yawmiyya and al-Usbū'iyya (i.e. daily and weekly). The weekly was mainly concerned with literature. Most prominent among its writers were Dr. M. Ḥusayn Haykal, the editor, and Dr. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn. The two became involved in a literary and philosophical dispute which the Fajr group closely followed. Al-Siyāsa al-Usbū'iyya ceased publication in 1930 and resumed in 1937, at which time the two giants seemed to have settled, or at least patched up, their differences. Al-Fajr reported the good news in its issue no. 1, volume 3.

2. Al-Balāgh al-Usbū'ī; also a weekly. This was of a literary nature. Among the leading figures who contributed to it was Al-'Aqqād, the most influential character in this group.

3. Al-Muqataṭaf. This is perhaps one of the earliest of the very few periodicals that showed genuine interest in Western culture as well as the modernization of Arabic literature. For example, we find that as early as 1902

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1. Cf. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 23, p. 1082.

one contributor had noted that the failure of the conservative poets was due to their lack of knowledge of European literature. It was originally founded in Beirut in 1876 by Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf and Fāris Nimr. In about 1885 its founders moved to Egypt and the publication of Al-Muqṭataf was resumed by Ṣarrūf. It continued to be published for more than fifty years.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that in 1903, the proprietors of this magazine managed to found Al-Sūdān, the first newspaper to be launched in the Sudan.

4. Al-Risāla. This magazine was most famous for the fluency and charming beauty of its literary Arabic. Ahmad Hasan Al-Zayyāt, its editor, was totally committed to the revival of the Arabic language from the state of decadence in which it was.

5. Al-Jarīda was founded by Muḥammad 'Abduh and edited by his pupil Dr. Aḥmad Luṭfī Al-Sayyid, a very renowned reformer and educationist whose liberal ideas retained their impact upon the younger generation well into the 1960s. Closely associated with Luṭfī Al-Sayyid was Qāsim Amlīn whose ideas about the position of women in society earned him the title of 'woman's emancipator' (muḥarrir al-mar' a).  

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1. See Anīs Al-Maqdīsī, Al-Funūn al-Adabiyya wa-A'lāmuhā fi'l-Nahḍa, Beirut, 1963, pp. 240-2.

The critical approach of the writers of Al-Jarīda embraced the Arabic language, which, it was thought, must be reformed and made capable of expressing the concepts of modern thoughts and meeting future requirements.

6. Apollo (1932-4). With the appearance of the Apollo group romanticism in Arabic literature was firmly established. The magazine was mainly concerned with poetry. It appeared after the younger generation in Egypt had absorbed the experiences and writings of their predecessors at home and abroad. The Apollo group were mostly read in the poetry of the second generation of the English romantic poets.<sup>1</sup> Shelley, Keats and Byron were extensively read and a good number of their works were translated and imitated in Arabic. To Apollo Shelley represented the quintessence of romanticism, and hence it is not surprising that in the 1920s and 30s more poems were translated by the Arab romantics from Shelley than from any other poet except Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup> Ibrāhīm Nājl, Sālīh Jawdat and ‘Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā who were more or less proficient in English and French translated many poems. In his Arwāḥ Shārīda, for instance, Alī M. Ṭāhā included two articles on Baudelaire and Paul Verlaine.

As for the publications that appeared in book form,

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1. See the introduction to Diwān Nājl, Cairo, 1961.

2. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥay, Tradition and English and American Influence in Arabic Romantic Poetry, unpublished thesis, the University of Oxford, 1973, p. 59.

the following writers and books seem to have left their marks on the Fajr group.

1. 'Abbās M. Al-'Aqqād:

Al-Fuṣūl (1922), Sā'āt Bayn al-Kutub (1927). A good number of the articles contained in these two books had appeared in newspapers and periodicals before. The last book included a three-part essay and a poem on Shakespeare. Yaqẓat al-Ṣabāh (1916), Al-'Aqqād's first poetic collection which included seven stanzas (in Arabic) from Shakespeare.

2. Aḥmad Amīn:

Fajr al-Islām (1927), Ḍuḥā al-Islām, 3 vv, (1933-6).

3. Aḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī:

Al-Shafaq al-Bākī (poetic collection) 1926. In his introduction to his dīwān, Abū Shādī gives a full explanation of his conception of poetry. Masrah al-Adab (1928), The Tempest (a translation into Arabic) (1929).

4. Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān:

His early writings included Al-'Awāṣif, Dam'a wa-Ibtisāma and Al-Mawākib, a relatively long poem in which Jibrān gave expression to his ideas and beliefs. During the latter part of his life he produced Al-Nabī (1926) the original text having appeared in English in 1923, Yasū' Ibn al-Insān (1928), Raml wa-Zabad (1926) and Ālihat al-Arḍ (1931).

5. Louis Cheikho:

Al-Ādāb al-'Arabiyya fi'l-Qarn al-Tāsi' 'Ashar, 2 vv,

2nd ed. 1926.

6. Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Qādir Al-Māzinī:

Ibrāhīm al-Kātib, (1931). Al-Māzinī was of course well known to members of the Group for his poetry also as is shown by 'Ashrī's two-part essay.<sup>1</sup>

7. Maḥmūd Taymūr:

Al-Shaykh Jum'a wa-Aqāṣīs Ukhrā (1927).

8. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal:

Zaynab: manāẓir wa-akhlāq rīfiyya (1914) (2nd ed. in 1929). This has been reckoned by many Arab critics as the first novel in the Arabic language. Jān Jāk Rūsū (Jean-Jacques Rousseau) two parts (1921 and 1922), Fī Awqāt al-Farāgh (1925), a collection of essays on literature, history, philosophy and morals. Thawra fi'l-Adab (1933). Tarājim Miṣriyya wa-Gharbiyya (1929).

9. Mustafā Luṭfī Al-Manfalūṭī:

Most appealing to the Group was Al-Manfalūṭī's superb display of modern Arabic 'balāgha' i.e. rhetorical devices and his ethical and social themes.

Al-'Abarāt, 2 vv, (1915), Al-Nazarāt, 3 vv, (1926)

10. Muḥammad Al-Sibā'ī:

Al-Abṭāl (1912). This is a translation of 'On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History' by Thomas Carlyle.

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1. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 2, pp. 77-82 and issue 3, pp. 96-102.

11. Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq Al-Rāfi'ī:

His writings are characterized by his delicate and personal prose on love and beauty. On his death Al-Fajr devoted two of its pages to an appreciation of Al-Rāfi'ī and highlighted the important place he occupied in Arabic letters.<sup>1</sup>

Tārīkh Ādāb al-'Arab the first part of which appeared in 1911 and the second part, Taḥt Rāyat al-Qur'ān in 1926. The latter is a collection of essays in literary criticism and was meant to refute the ideas expressed in Fi'l-Shi'r al-Jāhilī by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn. His series of books on love and beauty included Ḥaḍīth al-Qamar (1912), Rasā'il al-Aḥzān (1924), Al-Saḥāb al-Aḥmar and Awraq al-Kharīf, (1931).

12. Qāsim Amīn:

Tahrīr al-Mar'a, (1899), Al-Mar'a al-Jadīda, (1901). Both books were reprinted more than once.

13. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn:

Fi'l-Shi'r al-Jāhilī, (1926) and its heavily revised version Fi'l-Adab al-Jāhilī, (1927) Al-Ayyām, (1927).

14. Tawfīq Al-Ḥakīm:

Ahl al-Kahf, (1933).

15. Mikḥā'il Nu'ayma:

Al-Ghirbāl, (1923).

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1. See vol. 3, issue 7, pp. 209-10.

(b) English Sources:

"As a result of the Reconquest civil education was started and new schools were set up. English culture was dominant, especially at the secondary level and in the higher sections of the Gordon Memorial College. It was inevitable that English literature and other foreign literatures should spread among the educated class."<sup>1</sup> So one prominent figure in the Group has observed. The reading of the Group in Western literature, particularly English literature, naturally comes as a second step in the process of intellectual development. They were led into that second stage only after they had absorbed what was happening in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world. True the Group were capable of venturing into the world of English literature by themselves since their command of the English language cannot be disputed. But it was the guidance which they received from the Egyptian writers that indicated the direction in which they should go. Without such guidance and direction they could have taken a totally different course. One contributor to Al-Fajr has given us a vivid picture of this development.

"When the Mahdist era was over the people began to learn new subjects at the hands of the Egyptian teachers. Then the students started to imitate their teachers in form and expression with the result that what they produced

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1. Al-Haraka, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

was similar to what the ancient Arabs composed."<sup>1</sup>

Then a new phase followed, by the end of which the Group came of age. By means of reading and absorbing English literature they moved many steps towards intellectual maturity. Though they did not sever the intimate relation with Egypt's writers, there were many signs to suggest that they were becoming less and less dependent on what was written in Egypt. The Group began to reflect a developed and cultivated literary critical mind. Instead of conceiving of Egyptian literature as immaculate, they started to question and criticize everything they read. This new attitude could only be ascribed to the influence of English books on the younger members. Not unlike the leading writers of Egypt they were able to acquaint themselves with ancient and modern English literature, and through the English language they were able to read Russian, German, French, and Norwegian literature.<sup>2</sup>

Through the English language a wider door to the rich and vast heritage of mankind was opened to the Group. But for a start what the ambitious young men needed was a general knowledge of world culture. Having realized this

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1. Ibid.

2. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue no. 22, 16th June, 1935, pp. 1040-5, and Maḥjūb's Al-Ḥaraka al-Fikriyya, pp. 21-22.



fact they set out in search of Encyclopaedic knowledge.<sup>1</sup>  
Among the references which they were able to read are: The Science of Life, by J.S. Huxley and H.G. Wells, The Outline of History by H.G. Wells, Harmsworth's Encyclopaedia and John Drinkwater's Outline of Literature, History and Criticism. "We were only too glad to make use of such great reservoirs of knowledge," writes Maḥjūb, "and the English language was the only means by which we could satisfy our great desire for knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

Among the writers whom they were able to read were, Virgil, Goethe, Anatole France, Homer, Dante, Victor Hugo, Aristotle, Aristophanes, Calderon and Sophocles, and of the 19th century English writers they read Matthew Arnold (On Translating Homer and Essays in Criticism), William Hazlitt (Characters of Shakespeare and Table Talk), Thomas Carlyle (On Heroes, Hero-Worship and The Heroic in History and The French Revolution), Lamb, Lee Hunt, R.L. Stevenson and Oscar Wilde. Of the more recent writers they read J. Drinkwater (Abraham Lincoln and Anthology of English Verse), Aldous Huxley, G. Bernard Shaw, T.E. Lawrence (The Seven Pillars of Wisdom and Revolt in the Desert). In French literature they also had access to the works of

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1. The two words have been inserted in English in Al-Haraka, p. 20.

2. See Al-Haraka, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

Adolphe Thiers, Voltaire, Rousseau and Andre Maurois.

Of the current English literary magazines they were able to read Story Teller, True Story and The Cornhill Magazine as well as the daily newspapers such as the Times.

From the list of writers and poets which the present writer has been provided with it is apparent that the Group's readings were not entirely literary. In addition to the above mentioned names and titles the list covers religion, philosophy, science and education. It includes the names of Edison, Gibbon, Plutarch, Darwin, More, Cervantes, Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, and among poets writing in English, Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, Gray, Kipling, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Burns, Shelley, Byron, Keats and Hardy.

(c) Influential Writers and Poets:

It is to be noted that in the midst of these writers and poets, both Arab and foreign, certain names struck a personal chord in one member of the Group or another. In more than one instance such names have been singled out by one member, or more, and described as influential figures in the intellectual development of the Group. Most influential among the Arab writers was Al-'Aqqād who was greatly admired by the members of the Group and, to a lesser degree, Al-Māzini, Al-'Aqqād's close associate. This admiration appears in many instances. For example, in his preface to Diwān Al-Tinay Maḥjūb has referred to the impact of Al-'Aqqād on Al-Tinay. Maḥjūb and 'Abd

al-Ḥalīm in their jointly written biographical book (Mawt Dunyā) considered Al-‘Aqqād as their "guide in the wilderness of life." M. Ḥusayn Haykal was accorded a high place. His vivid descriptions were found to be most memorable. Al-Manfalūṭī and Al-Rāfi‘ī also left their marks on the young members of the Group.

The Al-Fajr group were in touch with the northern Mahjar literature. It may be assumed that the Group was influenced by the romantic, humanistic and mystical trends of the Mahjar poets and writers. Among those Jibrān stands out as the most influential writer. His book Al-Nabī was most fascinating to the Group. This has been reflected in an elegy on Jibrān where Maḥjūb has expressed his deep sorrows and great regard for the writer. Jibrān's contributions both in Arabic and English, were keenly read by the members of Al-Fajr.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the English writers and poets the Group were particularly impressed by the writings of the romantic critics and poets, such as William Hazlitt, Matthew Arnold, and above all, Thomas Carlyle. John Drinkwater has also been reckoned by one member as one of the major critics who have exerted their influence on the Group.<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth and Coleridge - better known in the Arab world as Shu‘arā’

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1. ‘Abd Allāh ‘Ashrī Al-Ṣiddīq, Recorded Interview, Omdurman, December, 1977.
  2. See Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue no. 4, pp. 113-115.

al-Buḥayra, i.e. the Lake Poets - are among the most celebrated poets. But best known and most admired by them were the late romantics with Shelley at the forefront.

It may be concluded that the main channels through which the Fajr group became acquainted with Western literature were formal education in civil schools, reading translations and Arabic monographs and critical essays on English poetry and direct study of the originals. Through these channels and by means of much earnest endeavour by these young people a modicum of knowledge of foreign literature, especially English, was made available, even to those who knew no foreign language.

## B. Evolution

### (i) Early Gatherings at the College:

It can be established that the earliest contacts between the Fajr members took place in the early 30s at the Gordon Memorial College in Khartoum. Nevertheless, it is possible that some of them had met even before that, e.g. at the intermediate school. It was, however, during their study at the College that most members came to meet each other and began to establish a kind of personal relationship. It is of great significance to note that in most cases this relationship developed into a lasting friendship. The fact that these gatherings took place at an educational institution must have enhanced the

process of intellectual crystallisation. The College provided the young and academically ambitious associates with an atmosphere favourable to the discussion of matters of interest and the exchange of views on current issues.

An influential factor in these early gatherings was of a political nature. It is indeed difficult to consider such gatherings without reference to the political circumstances prevailing in the country. The state of mistrust between the government and the educated class which followed the 1924 Rising has already been alluded to. The authorities took repressive measures against the younger generation. Those harsh measures included the College students. But their effect on the young was adverse. Not only had the sentiments of national solidarity and unity been aroused, but also the young associates were brought closer together than ever before. The fact that all the students were boarded at the College was another factor enhancing the process of fraternization and strengthening the friendship between them. In those days the list of prohibitions extended to make of almost every act by the students an offence against the regime. The teachers who acted in the dual capacity of teachers and administrative supervisors, kept a watchful eye on every move by the students. It was only natural that in such an atmosphere the reading of Egyptian newspapers, or, in fact, any publication other than text books within the premises of the College was strictly forbidden. The possession of Al-Siyāsa daily or weekly or that of the more popular Al-Balagh was an

incriminating act in itself.<sup>1</sup> All these restrictions made the younger generation all the more adamant on the question of reading, so much so that some of them were daring enough to smuggle such newspapers and periodicals into the College by means of hiding them under their clothes. "The prohibitory laws goaded us to study and profit," writes one colleague "under constraint and suppression we aspired to freedom."<sup>2</sup> It was under such circumstances that the younger generation came to realize the importance of freedom of thought and expression.

Under those conditions literary activities provided a good and most suitable outlet for the energies and suppressed feelings and aspirations of the young associates. Literary societies were set up under the supervision of the teachers, and in due course the students were allowed to start their own magazine, Majallat al-Kulliyya.

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1. The circulation of Al-Balāgh in the Three Towns in the 30s reached 500 copies per issue, where as that of Al-Siyāsa was 470 copies. See Maḥjūb M. Ṣāliḥ, Al-Siḥāfa al-Sūdāniyya fī Niṣf Qarn (Part one), Khartoum University, 1st ed., 1971, p. 117.
  2. See Mawt Dunyā, op. cit., pp. 48-51, for a full picture of the state of suppression under which the educated found themselves.

(ii) The Al-Fajr Nucleus:

The students were willy-nilly drawn into politics. Indeed, the interest of the great majority of them in politics was so overwhelming that it is hard to overlook it in any treatment of this period. But for the sake of the literary nature of this research, let us concern ourselves with those students who had a natural disposition to literature. In the above described atmosphere one can safely assume that amidst the large group of students small groups of friends must have sprung up. Members of such groups would naturally be drawn together by mutual trust and similar attitudes. It is the present writer's belief that one of these small groups represented the nucleus of the Al-Fajr group in the College. This can be substantiated by the following facts: Firstly, outside the College - following the 1924 Rising - study groups of earnest men began to appear in the Three Towns and provincial cities. Hence, the presence of such groups inside the College under the inspiration of ex-colleagues who were active in public life is only a natural and logical development. It has been noted by one scholar that the mortality rate among these groups was high. A few of them survived, and among them was Al-Fajr. Its literary nature must have helped it to survive without any fear of the authorities. Secondly, there is evidence to prove the existence of such a nucleus though it did not assume any particular character. Two members of the Group have recorded that "The Group's inclinations were integrated during their study, their

attitudes were drawn together through their mutual readings and their views and ideals were unified by their common beliefs."<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, there is more than one instance in which the members of Al-Fajr appear as closely associated friends during their study. For example, Maḥjūb and 'Abd al-Ḥalīm refer to Yūsuf Al-Tinay, Maḥmud Ḥamdī and M. 'Ashrī Al-Ṣiddīq in Mawt Dunyā. It is also related how they, as friends, used to frequent one of the rare book shops (the Sudan Bookshop) in order to acquire English books and at the same time, admire the beauty of the lovely Greek girl who was in charge. Fourthly, on their graduation in 1929, Maḥjūb was asked to speak on behalf of his colleagues at the Welcome Party which was given by the old graduates in honour of the newly-fledged batch.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that Maḥjūb was already reckoned as a leading figure. It also signifies that his literary abilities were well-known by then among his colleagues and friends. Further, the choice of Maḥjūb implies the existence of a close and intimate relationship between himself and, at least, a few of the graduate colleagues. Those few represented the nucleus of the Al-Fajr movement. Finally, following their graduation, the Group continued

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1. Maḥjūb and 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, Mawt Dunyā, op. cit., p. 74 and p. 118.
  2. As usual, the party took place at the Omdurman Graduates' Club.



their literary activities. Fortunately we have been provided with a clear indication as to how they applied the new norms of criticism to the works of the traditional poets.<sup>1</sup> Even before that Maḥjūb and Al-Mubārak Ibrāhīm, a less known member, and presumably some other members had managed to contribute to the newspaper Al-Ḥaḍāra. Maḥjūb's article, for instance, in Al-Ḥaḍāra, issue no. 598, sometime in 1927, reflects signs of early intellectual maturity.<sup>2</sup> This shows that even during their college days, some members of the Group contributed something worthy of publication in one of the two newspapers which were in circulation at the time. If that was the case the assumption that there was a literary group of like-minded friends who gathered together at the College would not be hard to accept. It would indeed seem rather surprising if such a group did not exist.

(iii) The Group Amidst the Cross-Currents of Public Life, 1929-1934:

While the masses seemed fairly contented with the prevailing state of affairs in the late 1920s, the educated class were far from being satisfied. The so-called post-

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1. See Mawt Dunyā, p. 95.

2. The article appears in Al-Adab al-Sūdānī wa-mā Yajib an Yakūn 'alyh wa-Dīwān al-Ṭabī'a by Ṭanbal, Beirut, 1972, pp. 41-6.

1924 generation was in a state of uncertainty and bewilderment. They felt that their country was passing through a difficult and most important phase in its modern history. Despite their deep sense of responsibility towards their country, they could neither participate in running its affairs nor prophesy the course its future would take. The matter was destined to rest entirely with the foreign administrators. The political status of the Sudan rested on the stipulations of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement, the terms of which proved to be controversial and dubious. As a result, the two partners found it hard to agree with each other. Hence, the lengthy debates they were forced into on the meaning and purpose of the Agreement proved to be futile.<sup>1</sup>

This was reflected in the state of affairs in the Sudan. The educated became subjected to this process of interaction between the two partners, with Britain gaining an ever increasing power in the administration of the country and the subjugation of its people. As a result of their occupation under a single administration they began to develop a feeling of solidarity and became welded by common interests and aspirations. These factors, coupled with the Government's harsh attitude towards the educated, made the younger generation more and more aware of the question of co-operation with Egypt and Britain.

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1. See M. 'Abd al-Rahīm, Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan, pp. 29-38.

But the famous strike by the Gordon College students dealt a serious blow to the unity of the educated. In the wake of their dispute with the authorities over the retrenchment of the graduates' salaries, they emerged disunited.<sup>1</sup> No sooner had they rediscovered the importance of unity and organized action than splits within their ranks took place. The two camps which emerged were closely associated with the two 'Sayyids', and implied an obvious sectarian difference. Consistent with its internal policy, the government encouraged the feuds and competitions which were going on between the 'ṭarīqas'. Further, as it was then practised, native administration based on tribalism had tended to create another form of religious sectarianism with which the younger educated class could not be reconciled. On these feuds and factions they turned their backs and joined one or the other of the study-circles which sprang up. Soon after when they had the opportunity of writing in the journals which appeared in the early and mid-thirties, they continued their attack on sectarianism and advocated the cause of national unity. Thus, matters were allowed to drift and get lost in the cross-currents of endless rivalry. The government was not prepared to allow any adequate measure of freedom of expression, except, of course,

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1. The world economic depression which started in 1929 had its effect on the Sudan. The retrenchment of salaries led to the famous strike of the Gordon College students in November, 1931.

for those with acceptable opinions.

On the literary scene the younger generation had its own differences with the older generation, the majority of whom were Sharī'a judges and teachers of Arabic and Islamic religious sciences. The older generation was looked down as old-fashioned and rigid in their attitude towards life in general and Arabic literature in particular. As the younger generation appeared to have better chances of promotion in the Civil Service, they were considered a threat to the status of the older generation. The apparent change in life coupled with the daring endeavours of the younger poets and writers at literary innovation and social reform added to the anxiety of the old and made them dismiss the activities of their opponents as an attempt to undermine the established beliefs and norms of life as well as the sacred heritage of Arabic literature. Most indicative of this rift between the two is the vehement attack made by the older poets on the younger modernists whose faith in Islam and affinity to Arabism and the Arabic language were fiercely called into question. Even their loyalty to the Sudan and moral behaviour were not immune to attack.

At the Omdurman Graduates' Club the older generation were in command and always had the upper hand in the club's affairs. One incident which bears witness to this fact and highlights their disagreement with the younger generation is the row which took place in 1930 over an

article which appeared in Al-Ḥaḍāra, the pro-government paper. The older generation took advantage of their majority on the club's committee and capitalised on the incident. Certain members were charged with ill conduct and, to the satisfaction of the older members, one young member was dismissed from the club.<sup>1</sup>

Being at odds with the conservative older generation and finding themselves at the mercy of a powerful and hostile government, the younger generation found it expedient to lie low for the time being. An effective outlet was required, particularly after the dramatic happenings of the recent past. The immediate post-1924 period witnessed the appearance of the colloquial patriotic song, but soon this form of expression gave way to serious discussions and study groups which were in most cases held in private.

From the cultural viewpoint the educated found themselves enchained by their social environment, yet through their education and private reading they were drawn to a wider outlook. This left them subject to conflicting ideas, beliefs and loyalties. The Western training they received was not intended to lead to an integrated character, or a developed spirit of work. What they needed was to be guided to an integration of the new world of science and technology with a system of ethics and religion which

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1. For further details see Mawt Dunyā, pp. 96-98.

would restore to their disoriented souls such serenity as would satisfy the whole man.

At the personal level, among the educated there emerged a group of young enthusiasts who entertained great hopes and ambitions. But, alas, neither their own means nor their rulers would make such hopes and aspirations attainable. They felt at a great loss and in most cases they were forced to retreat and detach themselves from public life. Sentiments of suffering, bewilderment, dissatisfaction and grievances could only be expressed in privacy and secrecy. At the private assemblies there was freedom in the wider sense of the word and when free the young could pursue their pleasures and joys and get some kind of consolation.

Thus it was not unnatural that many private assemblies and gatherings of young men should spring up in the late 1920s and early 30s.

(iv) The Search for Privacy:

A detailed look into the private world of some of the leading members of the Al-Fajr group may be of special significance and interest at this stage. By 'the private world' is meant those literary gatherings and private assemblies which ultimately led to the integration of the members of the Group and subsequently gave birth to their movement with the appearance of the magazine Al-Fajr. The private assemblies are interesting in view of the fact that at the time they represented a kind of social

phenomenon, being more than a novelty in Sudanese society. Although they were held in strict privacy many of the older generation took it upon themselves to attack such gatherings and described them as improper practices threatening the whole community.

The significance of these gatherings lies in the fact that under the prevailing circumstances they became important meeting-places for literary and political activities. So far as the Fajr group are concerned the assemblies acted as a catalyst which speeded up the process of intellectual polarization as well as that of understanding between many members of the Group. At those private gatherings many literary questions must have been raised and discussed at length. In privacy there was freedom and in the absence of conservatism with its aggressive attitude there was freedom of speech and behaviour as well. Such questions as prohibitable areas in poetry and literature could be dwelt upon in detail at liberty. Amorous and wine poems constituted an essential part in most of these assemblies.

It is worth mentioning that not all the study groups and private assemblies were of the same nature. They could be classified into three types:

1. Study groups held at the participants' homes in turn. These are characterized by their academic nature. No drinks or female companions were available. They usually took place during the College vacations.
2. Gatherings in the open air; preferably under the

moonlight. There was a kind of freedom although it was curtailed by the very fact that such meetings were held in the open. These can best be associated with the period of adolescence.

3. The literary salons (al-ṣālūnāt al-adabiyya).

They were held indoors and most commonly in houses of ill fame. The presence of a hostess or a young woman was essential in these salons. The atmosphere was more than relaxed. It would not be unfair to describe it as erotic and unchaste in most cases. Apparently singing and drinking were characteristic of these assemblies. ~~Numer-~~  
~~ably~~, Those belonging to Al-Fajr were able to take part in such salons<sup>only</sup> after their graduation from the Gordon Memorial College. It is worth noting that the term 'literary salon' sounds somewhat sophisticated. In the late 1920s and early 30s it was rather new and it was known to a few of the literary devotees of the time. It may also be noted here that 'pleasure' innocent or otherwise, formed an essential ingredient in these gatherings.

Most famous of these literary salons are those of Fawz and Waḥīd, which are the nicknames of the two hostesses who became associated with the assemblies of Khalīl Farah, the famous singer of the time and M.A. Maḥjub and 'Abd al-Ḥalīm and others respectively.

It is important to add that common to all three types was the interest in the arts and literature. But apart from that each of the three had its own pre-occupations. Khalīl Farah's circle, for example, was



predominantly concerned with politics, and most of its members had some connection with the 1924 Rising. Wahīd's salon, on the other hand, was dominated by literature. A confidential informant has told the present writer that Wahīd was an attractive intelligent young lady who often participated in the discussions of her guests.

These three respective types of assembly may be viewed in relation to the stages of life in general. As such each of them corresponds to one stage or another in the development of the members of the Al-Fajr group. The Group passed through each stage, but certain members may have taken part in more than one assembly at a time. Maḥjūb and others, for instance, had another gathering which was associated with Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Jalīl, the well known singer.

To gain an insight into the nature of these salons let us refer to Ḥasan Najīla who has devoted a considerable part of his book Malāmiḥ to a description of these assemblies. He furnishes us with a contemporary record of events: "Our society during that time was devoid of any public entertainments. It was a dreary life except for those private assemblies where pleasure could be stolen."<sup>1</sup>

In part 12 of Mawt Dunyā (pp. 66-73) we are left in no doubt as to the identity of one of the hostesses at whose house the gathering took place. The hostess is an unchaste

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1. Malāmiḥ, op. cit., p. 189.

woman whose salon is frequented by men from different walks of life. In addition to men of letters whom she receives she retains strong connections with important and influential figures in society. "She wondered at the phenomenal feature in the life of my generation. All of them [she observed] talked about literature, beauty and love with all the wantonness, impudence and pleasure - innocent and sensual - that can be thought of."<sup>1</sup> It was unavoidable to be frank with the woman and explain to her that they "were begotten of the years of desolation. When we entered the College the time of hardships had already started. Dreariness was reflected in every aspect of life: financially, socially, politically and literarily."<sup>2</sup> The repercussions of the dramatic happenings of the recent past were still there. It was a time of disillusionment and despair and "it was inevitable that a new kind of thinking should emerge." "We aspired for freedom which was beyond our reach. In our state of deprivation we sought beauty and freedom and became attached to literature since it is the means to freedom and beauty."<sup>3</sup>

In other words these assemblies represented a necessary outlet for the energies and suppressed desires of many of the younger people at that time. In view of all this, to

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1. Mawt Dunyā, pp. 69-70.

2. Ibid., same pages.

3. Ibid., p. 70.

the daring young members of Al-Fajr, the gatherings represented a kind of oasis in the arid life they found themselves in. To such salons they would flock to enjoy themselves away from the restrictions of public life and society. At such private and secret gatherings they could dabble in politics, drink, sing, discuss literary questions or recite poetry and flirt with intelligent, good-natured and uninhibited young women.

In view of the pleasures which were 'stolen' at these salons in a society which can be described as very conservative and segregated, it was inevitable that the question of morals should pose itself to the members of Al-Fajr. The members, for their part, were true believers in the arts and literature. They believed that art is the essence of life and literature cannot flourish in the absence of freedom, beauty and joy.<sup>1</sup> Hence it did not take them long to find a consolatory answer to the question of morals. History provided them with many examples and parallels. They could think of, for instance, the fabulous assemblies of Hārūn Al-Rashīd, the 'Abbāsīd caliph, who took delight in the singing of Ishāq Al-Mawṣilī and Abū Nuwās' poetic recitations in an atmosphere which was redolent of romance, art and beauty. Despite all that the caliph - it has been recorded - would not go to sleep until he had performed a prayer of one hundred raka'āt. Such gatherings

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1. Ibid, p. 25.

have always promoted and elevated literature. There are also the famous literary debates of the Umayyad dynasty which are closely associated with Sukayna Bint Al-Ḥusayn. In modern times the well-known literary salons in 18th century France could also be cited. These are but a few examples which the Group could think of, and they were good enough to vindicate their case and justify their venture.

(v) The Final Evolution:

The year 1929 is a landmark in the history of the Group. With the graduation of Maḥjūb and others from the College and their commission into public and civil life, a new and important phase in the formation of the Group had started. Although until then the members did not assume any name which might give them a kind of identity, it was through their gatherings, in public and private, their literary activities and tendencies and the close friendship which was apparently binding them together that the public became aware of them as a distinct group whose members were closely knit by their common stand on life and literature:

"No sooner had we moved into public life than we were faced by difficulties. We realized that society was different from what we had expected. Neither did it welcome our views nor did it attach any importance to high ideals."<sup>1</sup> So two prominent figures in the Group have

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1. Ibid., p. 100.

observed describing their early experience in public life. They discovered that the educated lived in an atmosphere of mistrust and intrigues. They were aiming for an immediate change in life and literature, but the first response was not only discouraging but their views were denied and their high ideals met with sarcasm from their own predecessors, their ex-colleagues. Their efforts were dismissed as mere signs of immaturity and inexperience.

But the young enthusiasts were not put off. They were determined to fight it out to the end. A year had passed and a new batch of graduates made its way to public life and joined the vigorous intellectual struggle which was going on at the Omdurman Club. This new batch gave strength and support to the movement of modernism with the result that the younger members became more and more outspoken in their views. There were signs of success and the Group were able to advocate their ideas and modern attitudes. The older generation decided to lie low for the time being. It was an undeclared truce between the two sides, and certain measures of freedom for the younger members were allowed. The latter seized the chance and launched a bitter attack on the traditionalists and their obsolete ideas, by criticizing their poetry and applying the new norms of literary criticism to their poems and unveiling the weaknesses and defects contained in them. That short-lived period of relative success was enhanced by the election of a few young members to the club's committee. Hence, there was an intensification of the

Group's literary and cultural activities.

The incident relating to the Al-Ḥadāra article in 1930 showed how vulnerable the modernists - including the Al-Fajr group - were. Further reprisals by the embittered older generation could be expected. The rift between the two camps became greater after the end of the Gordon College strike in October 1931. The deep division among the graduates was vigorously reflected in the Omdurman Club's elections late in the year. The modernists found it necessary to unite in the face of the conservatives. A small party comprising the Al-Fajr members and other sympathetic elements was formed.<sup>1</sup> The existence of the party and its aims became known to the educated class at large. This was the first time that the future members of Al-Fajr in collaboration with others had publicly proclaimed themselves as a separate body whose main concern was to campaign in and win the club's elections. As far as the election issue is concerned the party had no success. Many squabbles between the two camps followed and ultimately the authorities intervened, apparently with the encouragement of the older members who were in command of the club. The newly-formed party of young members were

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1. Maḥjūb and 'Abd al-Ḥalīm in Mawt Dunyā have recorded that the first meeting of the small party took place at the home of a friend in Abūrawf in the east end of Omdurman, but no date has been given.

greatly dismayed and - in view of the improper practices of the committee - they decided to withdraw from the club altogether.<sup>1</sup>

The defeated party did not break up immediately. It seems that they decided to continue their activities privately. For the future Al-Fajr protagonists, the separation from the Graduates' Club proved to be of great cultural benefit. During their self-imposed solitude they were immersed in serious reading and thinking. Their readings included 18th and 19th century English literary criticism as well as the 'Lake Poets'. The protagonists also had time to read ancient and modern Arabic literature. The result of all this appeared in the Group's contribution to the magazine Al-Nahḍa which first appeared in October 1931. They became its most prominent writers and at one time two members of Al-Fajr, 'Arafāt Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh and Muḥammad Aḥmad Maḥjūb were in charge of the magazine.<sup>2</sup>

Despite all this the group of friends were passing through a state of boredom and restlessness. They were convinced that true and immortal literature could only draw from the people's life. 'Arafāt, their oldest member, noticed this state of boredom. Experienced and practical as he always was, he put forward the idea of

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1. See Mawt Dunyā, p. 120.

2. See Al-Ṣiḥāfa al-Sūdāniyya fī Niṣf Qarn, op. cit., pp. 136 and 138.

forming a private small group which would concern itself with the arts and literature. The suggestion met with a warm and enthusiastic welcome and 'The Arts and Literature Society' was set up. This was by no means an organized society with offices and a constitution or regulations as the name might suggest. It was no different from the usual private gatherings which the early 1930s witnessed. But the fact that it was given a name is of significance. The Group was becoming more and more aware of its identity and hence its members thought it most appropriate to give a name to their ~~group~~, however limited its activities might be.

It is possible that this ~~group~~ was known by another name, i.e. 'The Intellectual Awakening Society' (Jam'iyat al-Nahḍa al-Fikriyya). According to investigations carried out by the present writer this was a continuation of the party of modernists who fought the elections together. An informed source has provided a list of names of those who formed the society. The list includes: 'Arafāt M. 'Abd Allāh, Muḥammad A. Maḥjūb, the two 'Ashrīs, 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Muḥammad, Yūsuf Muṣṭafā Al-Tinay, Al-Sīd Al-Fīl, Idward 'Aṭiyya, Muḥammad Zakī Muṣṭafā, Ibrāhīm Yūsuf Sulaymān, Ḥasan Al-Kid, Ḥusayn Al-Kid, Khidr Ḥamad and others.

There are very slight variations between the Jamā'at al-Ādāb wa'l-Funūn and Jam'iyat al-Nahḍa al-Fikriyya regarding the name and the initiation of each society. According to Maḥjūb and 'Abd al-Ḥalīm's account in Mawt Dunyā it was 'Arafāt who put forward the idea of forming



the 'Arts and Literature Group' where as the suggestion to form the 'Intellectual Awakening Society' was made by 'Abd Allāh 'Ashrī Al-Ṣiddīq.<sup>1</sup> But the fact remains that the aims of each were the same and they were of a purely academic nature. Both accounts give similar reasons for dispersal of the group or society. Maḥjūb and 'Abd al-Ḥalīm relate that short talks on Shakespeare, the theatre and the short story were given at the gatherings of the group. 'Abd Allāh 'Ashrī has confirmed this and recalled other subjects of discussion: M.A. Maḥjūb talked about 'High Ideals', Idward 'Atiyya on Shakespeare, Ḥammād Tawfīq on the Al-Gezira Scheme and 'Abd Allāh 'Ashrī presented a paper in English entitled 'Emotion and Revelation are Impossible Avenues of the Knowledge of Truth'.

As was characteristic of such private gatherings at the time the group or society lasted for a very short time. The first eight on the list, presumably with others, resumed their activities in private as usual. As most of them lived in the Al-Mawrada or Al-Ḥāshmāb quarters<sup>2</sup> their gathering came to be identified by the name Tajammu' al-Ḥāshmāb. The others, on the other hand, came to be known as Tajammu' al-Abūrawfiyyīn

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1. 'Abd Allāh 'A. Al-Ṣiddīq, Recorded Interview, Omdurman, December, 1977.

2. Al-Ḥāshmāb is said to be a part of Al-Mawrada quarter in the south part of Omdurman.

The Hāshmāb gathering maintained its existence, or at least the links between its members, until 1934, when under the leadership of 'Arafāt Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh they launched the magazine Al-Fajr.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE MAGAZINE AL-FAJR

##### Emergence:

Al-Fajr was launched on Saturday, the second of June, 1934, as a fortnightly magazine dedicated to the service of literature, the arts and general culture. By this time economic conditions inside the Sudan had improved somewhat. The retrenchment of the salaries of the graduates was ended and as a result the financial climate was more favourable for the landing of a new journal. In addition a change of attitude on the part of the authorities was apparent. The alarm caused by the events of 1924 had subsided and the ambitions of Germany and Italy dictated a more conciliatory attitude towards the leaders of opinion in the Sudan as elsewhere in the Empire. Some of the more stringent measures were modified and in this changed atmosphere it became more possible for the Al-Fajr group to launch the journal than before. The government seemed prepared to allow a certain measure of freedom of expression and educated Sudanese began to feel the need for a national magazine, or paper, which would fill the gap in the intellectual and social life of the country and give expression to their hopes and aspirations.

As an indication of the level of Sudanese journalistic activities at this time it may be mentioned that only one

paper was still in existence. Ḥaḍārat al-Sūdān, or Al-Ḥaḍāra for short, was launched in 1918 as a weekly paper, and in 1922 managed to appear twice a week. It was mainly concerned with social and political affairs. In its early years (1918-1924) its writings were closely associated with the two sayyids - 'Abd al-Raḥmān Al-Mahdī and 'Alī Al-Mirghānī - and their views about the Sudanese question. In 1924 the government took the paper over and from then on it became a semi-official paper expressing the views and attitudes of those who were in authority, its successive editors being chosen from the civil service. As a result freedom of expression in Al-Ḥaḍāra was greatly curbed and educated Sudanese were far from being contented with what was published in it. During its early years and for a few years after the government take-over, the paper was edited by Ḥusayn Sharīf, the first Sudanese journalist to run a newspaper. Ten years after his death the government decided to close down the paper and in 1938 Al-Ḥaḍāra ceased to be published.

In June 1934, a short time after the appearance of Al-Fajr, the periodical Al-Sūdān was revived under the editorship of the two shaykhs 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad and Aḥmad Al-Sayyid Al-Sawākinī.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Nīl followed in August of the same year and became

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1. Al-Sūdān was launched in 1903 as the first newspaper in the Sudan. It disappeared in 1925.

the first daily newspaper to be published in the Sudan. It was edited by an Egyptian archaeologist, Ḥasan Ṣubḥī.

To the members of the Al-Fajr group the launching of the journal was a great happening which meant the realization of a long-cherished dream. But they were also aware that it was only the start of their long endeavour to bring about the desired change in the life and literature of the Sudanese people and contribute towards the cause of their progress and civilization.

With the emergence of the magazine Al-Fajr a fully conscious literary movement began for the first time in Sudanese history. The signs of this movement were already to be seen and were clearly reflected in the Group's writings in the short-lived magazine Al-Nahḍa, which did not survive long enough to bear much fruit. The role of Al-Nahḍa was taken over by Al-Fajr, whose emergence was but a resumption of the message which had already been started. To the pen and efforts of 'Arafāt Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh, the editor of Al-Fajr, Al-Nahḍa owed a great deal. 'Arafāt and his close friend Maḥjūb took part both in its editing and administration. The leader of the Group had always hoped that Al-Nahḍa would survive its editor and proprietor Muḥammad 'Abbās Abū al-Rīsh, but much to his disappointment the periodical never appeared again. To him the disappearance of Al-Nahḍa meant the silencing of a noble and incomplete message in a country which needed the efforts of its enlightened men more than most. To fill this gap in the edifice of the country's national

regeneration and meet the needs felt by the aspiring younger generation 'Arafāt decided to shoulder the responsibility and with the help and encouragement of his intimate friends launched the magazine Al-Fajr.

Objectives:

The objectives of the journal were set out in the editorial of its first issue. This editorial may be regarded as a manifesto of the Al-Fajr group and is quoted in full:

Praise be to God who has guided us, for we would not have been rightly guided had not God guided us. And blessing and peace be upon the chosen one of His creation, the deliverer of the true message, and upon his family and the companions and followers and upon all the prophets and messengers.

Here is our paper in the hands of the reader. In it, to the best of our ability, there is a true picture of the principles in which we believe in serving the cause of literature, the arts and general culture. Our ultimate goal is to render a service to the Sudanese people and the Arabic language. The common good is our guiding principle. We shall uphold the word of justice whatever the consequences may be. Neither by subservience nor submission are we bound up with any particular grouping or individual in word or in deed.

This paper is meant for men of letters, poets and

reformers from among our people as well as from other sister Arab countries. In it they will find a wide field to exercise their pens and a show-case for their thoughts as they aspire as we do to the promotion of culture and the support of literary, artistic and moral reform which is meant to enlighten the mind and comfort the soul.

It is not a paper for the proponents of dissension or partisanship; nor is it a tool for siding with one party against another. It is committed to promoting Arabic literature, spreading the light of knowledge and dispelling the clouds of ignorance, removing partisanship and animosity; these evils from which the East has suffered from the dawn of history.

This is our paper; drawing its objectives and features from the very name we have given it. It is our cherished hope that it will be a true dawn which will soon be followed by a bright morn and a radiant day, the healing rays of whose sun will spread out and exterminate the germs of ignorance, animosity, partisanship, backwardness and stagnation, and regenerate in us and in our descendants a new spirit and zeal which will free us from the fetters of tradition which have checked our progress at a time when the innovators and great fighters have pushed their way along the path of advancement and civilization.

I think that it will be well to answer certain charges even though I have not yet been confronted with them in person. It is rumoured in certain circles that under the pretext of rejuvenation<sup>e</sup> this magazine intends to obliterate

all that is old in Arabic literature, whether good or bad and that it has only been created in order to discredit the history of the Arabic language and propagate an undesired innovation merely from an attachment to the literature, art and morals of the Europeans. May I say to these people and those who believe in what they say that the idea of innovation does not mean demolition or destruction and that in literature and the arts one cannot totally ignore or overlook the established tradition. The rich and fertile heritage of Arabic will always receive the greatest care, attention and respect of which we are capable. Furthermore, we would like to emphasise to them that it is unavoidable for us to read and study foreign literatures, and that our most important task is to solve our own problems before making an offering to the rich Europeans whose bellies are full of delicious food and drink of broken millet.

This is our course, and we call people to it by reason and exhortation and argue it in a seemly manner, and we offer our hand to every worker in the service of reform, and God is our guide on the right path.<sup>1</sup>

Shift of Emphasis:

Late in 1934, when Sir Stewart Symes was appointed Governor General, a change in the policy of Al-Fajr became imminent. Being concerned about the mounting Nazi-Facist

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 1, pp. 1-2.



campaign to woo the colonial peoples of the British and French empires and its possible effect on the growing nationalism of the Sudanese, the newly-appointed Governor decided that it was expedient to reduce pressure. In about April, 1935 the editor of Al-Fajr was informed that censorship of journals and newspapers had been lifted and that editors could publish whatever they wished on their own responsibility. Accordingly in issue number 19 dated May 1, 1935, the editor of Al-Fajr announced that the magazine was from then on making ' a called-for departure in objectives and subject matter.' While in the past it had been devoted to the arts and literature Al-Fajr's main concern was now to be with the social and political life of the country. From this issue onward the Arabic editorial was regularly translated into English with the translation appearing at the back of each issue. This pattern was slightly changed in volume three where the English text appeared on the same page alongside the Arabic version. The reason for translating the editorial article was obviously to keep those in authority and the foreigners in general informed about the younger generation's ideas and views on the different aspects of Sudanese life. It is worth noting that the policy of translating an article - or more - into English was not an entirely new practice in the Sudan. As early as 1904 a similar step had been taken by the newspaper Al-Sudān, which issued a summary of its contents in English in order to attract non-Arab readers and hence increase its circulation.

The change in policy - or rather the shift of emphasis - prompted a kind of modification in form and subject matter: "In form and editorial organization," writes the editor of Al-Fajr, "we are to follow as closely as we can, the traditions of the best known English weeklies. For this purpose we have gained the service of some young writers - all from the younger generation - each to take charge of one section. Thus the editorial task is to be discharged with real individual and collective responsibility."<sup>1</sup> The editorial goes on to clarify the new turn in its policy:

"What do we stand for? What is our policy? may be reasonably asked. Obviously we are not entirely satisfied with the present run of things, and we definitely wish to stand for a new order of intelligent reform, and a steady progressive life along our own lines, guided by the permanent and intrinsic lessons of the cultural heritage of the human race. We wish to see the young enlightened generation taking an active part in the affairs of their country, certainly not in the notorious, facile, negative, irresponsible way; but in a truly civic temper and real responsibility."<sup>2</sup>

The independent and neutral stand of the Group has

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 19, (English editorial), pp. 925-4.
  2. Ibid.

been stressed once more. "Let it be affirmed at the very outset that we hold no brief for any social or political system .... We adhere to no party or a group already existing or having the faintest shadow of existence. Indeed our role will be to a large extent - in so far as it is humanly possible - to see things steady, and to see them whole, away from and above the sectarian, the partial and the prejudiced outlook."<sup>1</sup> The manner in which they would endeavour to get their ideas across to their readers would be one of nobleness and friendliness. "Our means in making our viewpoint effective will not be through shouting, agitating, or the running down of a person, a group or a class. We shall welcome co-operation in our avowed purposes, from whatever quarter it may come."<sup>2</sup> Tolerant and considerate as the editors promised they would be, they were convinced that there was nothing more effective in preserving the best in the old as well as in the new as free and critical expression.

Editing:

As far as the editing of the journal is concerned it has to be pointed out that Al-Fajr had no editorial staff of its own who were wholly devoted to this task.

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

Indeed, it was not humanly or financially possible for it to achieve such a thing in those early days of journalism in the Sudan. In view of the fact that he was not a government employee, 'Arafāt was able to devote all his time to Al-Fajr, and he was virtually in charge of everything. But this should in no way detract from the great help which he received from his close friends; above all Muḥammad Aḥmad Maḥjūb.

Indeed it was that group of friends, headed by 'Arafāt, who actually represented the editorial staff of Al-Fajr. All of them - with the exception of 'Arafāt - preferred not to have their names published or mentioned. As usual they used to meet privately and discuss matters relating to their journal. From the present writer's investigations the following names seem to have taken part in the editing of Al-Fajr at one stage or another: Muḥammad Aḥmad Maḥjūb, Yūsuf Muṣṭafā Al-Tinay, Muḥammad 'Ashrī Al-Ṣiddīq, 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Muḥammad Al-Sīd Al-Fīl, and 'Abd-Allāh Ashrī Al-Ṣiddīq and Al-Tijānī Yūsuf Bashīr. With the exception of the last two, they were all in the civil service and it was unavoidable that they had to work at night beside 'Arafāt. It has to be stressed that they were all very enthusiastic about the laborious task of editing the journal and that the work was done quite willingly and gratuitously.

After the death of 'Arafāt, Ahmad Yūsuf Hāshim became the editor in charge. Although Hāshim was not a prominent member of the Group, it was inevitable that he should be

entrusted with the responsibility, since he was self-employed and the law at the time did not permit any government employee to edit a newspaper or magazine.

The Collection of Al-Fajr:

The publication of Al-Fajr extended from the 2nd of June, 1934 to the 16th of August, 1937. Short as this span may seem, it has been made even shorter by the fact that the periodical ceased to be published temporarily after issue number 4, volume 2, dated October 1, 1935. Its publication was resumed seventeen months later on March 1, 1937, under the editorship of Ahmad Yūsuf Hāshim. 'Arafāt, the founder, was presumably ill during that period of cessation and his subsequent death occurred on Thursday the 23rd of July, 1936.

The Central House for Records (Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Markaziyya) in Khartoum managed to collect and republish all issues of Al-Fajr which became available to its researching staff in 1969. It was through the help of people who were either closely associated with the Al-Fajr group or those who were contemporaries of Al-Fajr that the task was accomplished. In all the House managed to get hold of copies of forty different issues of the magazine. These have been collected into three volumes according to the year of publication:

Volume One comprises the first 24 issues, which appeared between June 2, 1934 and August 1, 1935. There are four books in this volume, each of which contains six

consecutive issues.

Volume Two consists of four issues compiled in one book, appearing between the 17th of August and the 1st of October, 1935.

Volume Three comprises 12 issues from March 1, 1937 to August 16, 1937.

Volumes One and Two are representative of Al-Fajr in its first era under the editorship of 'Arafāt, Volume Three, on the other hand, represents the second era in the magazine's life when Aḥmad Yūsuf Hāshim became the editor in charge.

In the course of his research the present author came to suspect that some issues of Al-Fajr might still be missing. Personal contacts were made with historians and other prominent figures who had close associations with Al-Fajr in order to clarify the matter. The cause of this suspicion was the relatively long period of time during which the magazine disappeared, or, at any rate, during which no trace of any issue of Al-Fajr could be found. 'Arafāt died on July 23, 1936, and the last and latest issue of Al-Fajr during its first era is dated October 1, 1935. In other words the publication of the journal ceased nine months before the death of 'Arafāt. This period of cessation seems too long even if one takes into account the proprietor's prolonged illness and the gradual deterioration in his health.

On the opening page of issue number 2, volume 3, dated March 1937, appears a portrait of the deceased.

Under this appears a copy of the text of the announcement of his death which was published in the issue of Al-Fajr dated July 23, 1936. This is rather puzzling, since such an issue is missing from the present collection of the magazine. Further, it is possible that another issue is missing. 'Abd Allāh 'Ashrī Al-Ṣiddīq, who was once an active member of the Group, told the story of a famous and inflammatory poem which was composed by Ṣālih 'Abd al-Qādir and published in Al-Fajr in its early days. The poem was said to have caused much controversy in Egypt because of its unfriendly and almost insulting attitude towards the Egyptian people. Ḥasan Najīla, now a prominent and influential writer, has given an identical account of the incident and related how many Egyptian subscribers to Al-Fajr in the Sudān and Egypt returned that issue which contained the fiery poem in protest and disapproval. When Najīla learnt that the poem and perhaps the issue in question was missing his response was one of surprise and disappointment.

To this may be added the fact that in its recent index to the collection of Al-Fajr the House of Records cast a shadow of doubt upon the completeness of the collection of the magazine by hinting that there were more issues to be reproduced.

It can be concluded that some issues of Al-Fajr, especially in the first era, are still missing. As regards the period of cessation extending from July 23, 1936 to March 1, 1937, the reasons for this seem quite plausible.

The periodical ceased to be published mainly because of the many difficulties and problems which the colleagues of 'Arafāt had to deal with. Most pressing was the financial problem which became more and more acute with the passage of time. Apart from this, the Group realized that none of them was eligible to edit the magazine and the question of who would take up the responsibility of editing Al-Fajr must have taken considerable time to settle.

Format and General Pattern:

In its early days Al-Fajr appeared in book form and was approximately 6.5" x 9" in size. After the period of cessation the journal emerged in a bigger size of 8.5" x 12". It is not certain whether the covers of Al-Fajr were in white or any other colour. In the reproduction made by Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Markaziyya those of volumes one and two are in light blue. Volume three has an orange cover. On the front cover of each book of volumes one and two there is a simple drawing showing the half-rising sun. But a similar emblematic drawing does not appear on the inside first page of any issue, nor is it to be found on the outside cover of volume three or the inside pages of any of its issues.

On the top of page one of every issue the particulars identifying the journal follow one general pattern.<sup>1</sup> Below

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1. See photo-copy of a specimen title page on p. 313.  
of this thesis.



that appears the editorial article under the heading Hadīth Al-Fajr. The table of contents appears regularly at the back of the magazine after the English translation of the editorial. Here are the contents of Issue Number One (volume one) which consists of 48 pages: the Al-Fajr Address, Al-Fajr, Sāfū (Sappho), A brief talk about the Literary Movement, Studies: Sālīḥ 'Abd al-Qādir, a poet lacking in artistry, David's Psalm (poems; the first issue contains seven of them), The Story: The Old Friends, The Echo of Society, From the Depths of History: Al-Mu'tamid ibn 'Abbād, Facts from Life, To the Editor of Al-Fajr (correspondence).

The following became regular features in the first 18 issues:

One literary study, or more. The article could be of a critical or historical nature, or a review of a book, David's Psalm, The Echo of Society, The Story and/or The White Screen<sup>(Cinema)</sup>, Al-Fajr and its Readers. The editorial was a permanent feature and it always had a heading of its own.

Following the announced change in policy certain modifications took place as from issue number 19 (volume one). The following became prominent sections in the paper:

The Sudan in the Light of Al-Fajr, The World in the Light of Al-Fajr, Fi'l-Quṭr al-Shaqīq, The Arts and Literature, which embodied the Group's literary ideas and beliefs; Sciences, the Story and Correspondence to Al-Fajr, David's Psalm, the section for poetry disappeared,

but poems continued to be published in different places and were relatively fewer in number. 'The Cinema and Theatre' replaced the 'White Screen' section. Thamarat al-Matābi' (The product of the presses), appeared occasionally. Some new books appearing under this heading were reviewed very briefly.

#### Reception At Home:

Al-Fajr was met with enthusiasm and a warm welcome from its readers at home and abroad. In the Sudan it was greeted by the rising generation as the articulate body which to a great extent reflected their ideas, hopes and aspirations. Its appearance filled a gap in the intellectual and social life of the educated. The independent stand of the journal together with the modernistic attitude of its writers and their moral courage contributed very much towards its popularity among the younger generation. In Al-Fajr they were provided with a reservoir of literary knowledge and general culture since the periodical was entirely devoted to this end. Furthermore, they were provided with the opportunity to write and express their views on life and literature. Such an opportunity was severely limited in Al-Ḥaḍāra, the only other paper whose preoccupations and interests were far from being literary.

This warm reception which Al-Fajr received was expressed in many letters and poems of welcome from its readers all over the country. Most expressive of this welcoming attitude was perhaps the letter published in

volume one, issue 7, pp. 317-319. Another very eloquent letter was sent by Yaḥyā Al-Faḍlī. Mention should also be made of the supporting and encouraging letter sent by Aḥmad Muḥammad Ṣālih, an outstanding traditional poet. Indeed, his may well be taken as a friendly gesture from the older generation at large.<sup>1</sup>

When Al-Fajr changed its policy with the result that less emphasis was placed on literature, one contributor objected to this change. He expressed the view that Al-Fajr had been more enjoyable and useful in its early form than it was after the change. He was convinced that there were many of its readers from other parts of the Arab world who shared his view and who were impressed by the standard of its previous literary publications. He maintained that through the publications of Al-Fajr such readers were also able to acquaint themselves with the cultural and literary movement which was going on in the Sudan.<sup>2</sup>

Hundreds of young men from all over the Sudan were attracted to the magazine and began to take an ever increasing interest in what was published in it. Many of them were anxious to contribute to it. The number of its subscribers reached 1500 by the 1st of August 1935,

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 2, pp. 45-46.

2. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 21, p. 1002.

which was a very impressive achievement by the standards of those days. Even late in the 1940s it was not possible for the proprietors of the newspaper Al-Ra'y al-‘Āmm to make such an achievement.<sup>1</sup>

However, after the change of policy the demand for Al-Fajr became even greater. This fact was highlighted by the warm public reception given to ‘Arafāt when he visited the town of ‘Aṭbara sometime before August 1935.

#### Reception Abroad:

There is little evidence to suggest that Al-Fajr was widely read in the Arab world. But one may safely assume that it was known in many parts of it. The editors of Al-Fajr and a few of their Arab counterparts were in the habit of exchanging copies of the magazines which they edited. Among these were the periodical Al-Fajr which was published in Palestine, Al-Majalla, which was edited by Salāma Mūsā and Al-Risāla which was run by Aḥmad Ḥasan Al-Zayyāt. The latter two were published in Egypt.

By and large, it was in Egypt that the magazine enjoyed its greatest relative popularity. This was mainly because of the special relationship between Egypt and the Sudan and partly also due to the fact that Al-Fajr represented a new literary movement in a country which had long

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1. Ḥasan Najīla, Recorded interview, Khartoum, December, 1977.

standing cultural ties with Egypt. The Sudanese had been dependent on Egyptian writings for a long period of time, and now that a small enterprising group had emerged as an embodiment of the younger generation's views it was only fair and appropriate that Egyptian readers should pay attention to what they had to say and acquaint themselves with their literary production. What chiefly encouraged the Egyptian reading public to pay attention to Al-Fajr was the fact that a few of these Sudanese writers had already captured their attention by the appreciable literary contribution which they had made to some of Egypt's periodicals. Maḥjūb, for example, had some of his poems published in Apollo and Muḥammad 'Ashrī Al-Siddīq was the first writer to review and criticize Ṣundūq al-Dunyā by Al-Māzinī in the weekly Al-Siyāsa.

Against this background it was not unnatural that many Egyptian readers became interested in the writings of Al-Fajr and subscribed to it. This was highlighted by the fact that many of the subscribers returned their copies of the issue containing Sāliḥ 'Abd al-Qādir's controversial poem.

As regards literary contributions, seven Egyptian writers have contributed to Al-Fajr. Among them are Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Ḥamza and Ḥasan Subḥī, the first of whom was the editor of Al-Balāgh. The two took part in discussing the issue of Sudanese national literature which was taken up by Muḥammad Aḥmad Maḥjūb. Further,

Al-Māzinī, the prominent writer, responded to the two-part critical essay on his poetry which was published in Al-Fajr by M.A. Al-Siddīq.<sup>1</sup> A copy of Al-Māzinī's reply appeared in Al-Fajr.<sup>2</sup> Some of the contributions to Al-Fajr proved to be of an exceptionally high standard. To the Egyptian readers it was something beyond their expectations, so much so that Al-Siyāsa republished some of the material which appeared in Al-Fajr twice without the consent of the editor or even mentioning the name of the journal. The editor of Al-Fajr expressed his concern about the incidents and drew the attention of the editor of Al-Siyāsa to the impropriety of such practices.<sup>3</sup>

Another example which bears witness to the popularity of Al-Fajr among Egyptian writers and to the great esteem in which it was held, is the fact that many of them used to present its editor with copies of their newly-published works. Short reviews of such books appeared in Al-Fajr from time to time.<sup>4</sup> Further, the emergence of Al-Fajr was welcomed by the Egyptian Mail as well as Al-Balāgh.

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 2, pp. 77-82 and vol. 1, issue 3, pp. 96-102.
  2. Cf. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 5, pp. 205-207.
  3. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 5, p. 221 and vol. 1, issue 9, p. 384.
  4. See, for example, vol. 1, issue 8, pp. 412-413 and vol. 1, issue 11, pp. 509-510.

General Lines and Views:

The general lines of Al-Fajr and the literary views advocated in it derive from the set objectives of the magazine. As such they are in conformity with these objectives and are geared to fulfilling them. The following constitute the underlying principles in the policy of Al-Fajr.

(a) Moderation:

One of the underlying features of the writing in Al-Fajr is its moderation. This was dictated by the editors' own circumstances; religious, social and cultural. So far as literature is concerned this line has been stressed and highlighted in many instances in the magazine. In volume 1, issue 20, pp. 943-4, under the subtitle 'A Serious Phenomenon', the writer expresses his belief in a literary movement which is neither dependent on the output of the West nor confined to the realms of the classical heritage of the Arabs. Such an independent and creative movement should be allowed to draw from both literatures.

On an earlier occasion (volume 1, issue 2, p. 76) there is a genuine and direct call upon the older generation to take part in the new movement by contributing to Al-Fajr. This moderate attitude persisted throughout the lifespan of the periodical. In volume 3, issue 3, dated April 1, 1937, the editor of the 'Arts and Literature'

section expresses the view that the younger generation - whom Al-Fajr represents - are fully aware of the important role which the older poets have played in the literary development of the Sudan. But he regrets the fact that the Shuyūkh are standing aloof while their experience, skill and guidance are urgently needed by the younger poets.<sup>1</sup>

As far as their ambition to instruct and guide the younger poets was concerned, the editors of Al-Fajr maintained that they did not intend to disappoint those beginners to the extent of breaking their tender hearts or distressing their ambitious souls. But, at the same time, the magazine could not allow literary criticism to be reduced to mere flattery which - although it might save the younger poets' pride - was bound to be misleading and breed self-conceit.

(b) Standard of Writing:

Al-Fajr endeavoured to set an example of good writing. All its editors stood very firm throughout on the question of maintaining a high quality in everything they published in the magazine. When the first issue came out Al-Fajr appeared in an overwhelmingly literary guise, so much so

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1. Al-Fajr, pp. 81-84.



that some of its critics thought that the standard of what was published was far beyond the intellectual abilities of the general public and that it looked as if it was intended to be read by its own editors. But the latter were determined to proceed along the lines which they had set out. This insistence on a high quality in the published material prompted the editors to adopt a highly selective attitude to the readers' contributions. In a country like the Sudan such a hard line could only be met with disapproval and indignation. It naturally followed that in its early days Al-Fajr was fiercely criticized by some of the somewhat dismayed readers and writers. More distasteful was the fact that such criticism was published not in Al-Fajr as might be expected, but in the other two papers; Al-Ḥaḍāra and Al-Sūdān.

Nevertheless, the editors of Al-Fajr remained convinced that in order to succeed and achieve their objectives it was inevitable for them to raise the standard of their magazine above those generally prevailing among the population at large. To them this attitude had nothing to do with intellectual arrogance. A true writer would have to elevate his readers to his enlightened world of thoughts and ideas and not to descend to their state of ignorance, common beliefs and superstitions.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Cf. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 3, p. 115 and vol. 1, issue 24, p. 1176.

The editors kept themselves constantly aware of the paramount importance of maintaining the high standard of their journal, for in addition to educating and enlightening their fellow citizens they hoped to reflect a good image of their literary movement in the rest of the Arab world; especially Egypt, Syria and Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note that consistently with its general line, Al-Fajr rejected an article by one member of the Group who was to become the editor in charge after the death of 'Arafāt. Aḥmad Yūsuf Ḥāshim gives a vivid account of his own experience with 'Arafāt when he entertained the hope of having one of his articles published in Al-Fajr.<sup>2</sup> Another incident which highlights the editors' concern about the standard and image of their journal is to be found on page 268 (volume 3, issue 9) where one contributor receives a rebuke for attempted plagiarism.

(c) Independence and Impartiality:

In Al-Fajr an independent and impartial line was followed. Many of the questions which were raised in the journal were treated with relative freedom and

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1. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 5, p. 221 and vol. 2, issue 1, p. 16 or vol. 2, issue 3, p. 101.

2. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 13, pp. 593-596.

audacity. In those days, given the prevailing conditions, a great deal of moral courage was required from those who might attempt to criticize, or even make the slightest observation about society, the government or men of letters.

"Pseudo-religious, tribal or traditional prejudices, vested interest, mystic dogmatism, the force of habit are 'jointly and severally' responsible for strewing the writer's path with thorns requiring infinite delicacy and tact in treating almost every subject of social, political, religious or even economic importance. Even in the realm of gossip and scandal, a field of inexhaustible fertility in other countries, so many cases are 'taboo' that almost all interest is stolen out of the 'local and personal columns.'" <sup>1</sup>

Maḥjūb and 'Abd al-Ḥalīm recorded that people were so unaccustomed to criticism of the government and the public expression of nationalistic views at that time that some of them suspected that Al-Fajr published some of its articles with the consent, or even the backing of the government.<sup>2</sup>

In order to preserve their independence the promoters of Al-Fajr preferred to run their journal at a loss met

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 24, (English editorial)  
p. 1177.
  2. Mawt Dunyā, p. 146.

from their pockets and then chose to close down altogether rather than to accept financial help from any influential quarter or figure.

By reflecting their views in this daring and independent manner the editors of Al-Fajr won the respect and admiration of their readers. Many examples may be cited to illustrate this uninhibited critical attitude. One such example is the review of three books written by Salāma Mūsā, Ḥasan Kāmil Al-Ṣayrafī and Mukhtār Al-Wakīl, prominent Egyptian writers at the time.<sup>1</sup> Another illustration of self-confidence is to be found in the observations made about the Arabic Language Academy in Cairo.<sup>2</sup>

(d) Specialized Writing:

Notwithstanding the country's enormous difficulties and handicaps in all walks of life - the prevailing illiteracy, the poverty of the people and the low standard of living, the writers of Al-Fajr pioneered the call for a kind of specialized contribution to their journal. The educated were urged to take part in the process of general education and enlightenment which could best be effected

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1. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 9, pp. 412-413.

2. Cf. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 19, p. 105.

through the writings of those who had knowledge of or particular interest in a specific field of learning. However scanty such knowledge might be, the editors believed that it would enable the journal to render a most valuable service to Sudanese society. The call was first made by an anonymous young literary devotee, and about three months later the need for specialized contribution was stressed once more.<sup>1</sup>

Much to the editors' satisfaction the call produced a positive response from the readers. Many articles found their way to publication. Among the subjects which were treated the following proved to be most interesting and useful: The Nature of Things by 'Abd-Allāh 'Ashrī, History by Makkī Shibayka, The Cooperative Movement by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Samāra, Medical Care by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Muḥammad. In literature Al-Tinay wrote about the Art of Drama and Kubla Khan, Maḥjūb and Muḥammad 'Ashrī contributed many essays in literary criticism and book reviews. A host of poets, including Al-Tijānī, Mīmān Khalaf and Ḥamdī published their poems regularly in Al-Fajr.

Later on, with the shift of emphasis, new columns and sections appeared. Al-Sūdān 'Alā Daw' Al-Fajr reflected

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 3, p. 130, and vol. 1, issue 8, p. 366.

internal affairs, social, political and economic, where as Al-'Ālam 'alā Daw' Al-Fajr dealt with foreign affairs, from Sino-Japanese relations, communal strife in India and European re-armament, to T.E. Lawrence and Arab unity and Italian imperialism in the horn of Africa. Thus the call for specialized writing was successful and finally became one of the dominant features of Al-Fajr.

#### Literary Trends and Views:

The Al-Fajr group have embraced and attempted to propagate the following principles and ideas:

##### (a) Western Culture, Especially English Literature:

With great zeal the Group have embraced and disseminated it. This stems from their firm conviction that the cultural production of mankind is the common heritage of peoples of all races and at all times.<sup>1</sup> Maḥjūb believes that there is a world-wide interrelation between men's ideas and views.<sup>2</sup> Thus, acquaintance with Western culture and the study of English literature have been regarded as invaluable assets by the Group; so much so that one prominent member counts them as one of the basic requirements for any literary production in Arabic literature.<sup>3</sup> The editors of Al-Fajr

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1. Al-Ḥaraka, p. 22.

2. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 9, p. 387.

3. See Al-Ḥaraka, pp. 35, 38 and 39.

believed that from Western culture the new literary movement in the Sudan would be provided with the revitalizing force and inspiring models it so urgently needed.

This trend has been highlighted in numerous instances. In one such instance the younger generation have been advised to widen the scope of their knowledge and deepen their literary experience by reading Western literature.<sup>1</sup> The founding of the Charles Lamb Literary Society in England has been reported in Al-Fajr with enthusiasm and admiration, and a brief biographical note on the renowned writer has been given.<sup>2</sup> The King's Literary Awards presented in 1937 has been viewed by Al-Fajr as a good example which shows Royal recognition for men of letters in England. As usual the English people have set an example and it is for the Arabs to follow suit.<sup>3</sup>

(b) New Genres:

At the very outset in the first issue of the journal one contributor notes that Arabic literature is deficient in four valuable branches; the short story, the novel, drama and autobiography. The first three are at their

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 8, p. 367

2. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 21, Al-Ādāb wa'l-Funūn section.

3. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 24, Al-Ādāb wa'l-Funūn section.

incipient stage whereas the last is virtually non-existent. The writer calls upon his colleagues to pay more attention to and start practising all four genres.<sup>1</sup>

The interest in these genres has been stressed in issue 22 (volume 1) by which time many attempts had been made.

(c) The Promotion of a National Literature:

The idea was first expounded by Maḥjūb in a debate at the Omdurman Graduates' Club on the 23rd of March 1935. The debate was followed up in Al-Fajr and many writers - including two prominent Egyptian men of letters - took part in it. The theme of creating a Sudanese national literature is inevitably bound up with the emergence of Sudanese nationalism. By vigorously following it up and prolonging its discussion in their journal the editors of Al-Fajr have cautiously pursued one of their set objectives.<sup>2</sup>

(d) Literary Clubs and Societies:

One of the perpetual calls made by Al-Fajr is for the founding of literary clubs and societies. This is another aspect of the editors' involvement in the process of national awakening. It is apparent that the call for

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 1, pp. 11-12.

2. This subject has been discussed in chapter IV of this thesis.



the presence of such clubs is closely linked with the political future of the Sudan. The editors wished to mobilize and prepare the younger generation for the national responsibilities which awaited them. It is from this angle that the question of oratory has been stressed. The younger generation were required to master the art of rhetoric before they would be able to address the public, in due course, in the most articulate manner.<sup>1</sup>

(e) Literature in General:

Most profound and important are the literary views of Al-Fajr and its contribution to poetry and criticism. The Group's views and productions cannot be divorced from what was going on in the rest of the Arab world, and hence it is important to keep in perspective the development of Arabic literature in general. By the end of the First World War and the early 1920s much had been achieved by way of modernization and rejuvenation. By the beginning of the 1930s Arabic literature had progressed beyond the classical imitations of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and was assuming a more modern character. New forms such as the short story and critical essay appeared under Western influence. Social reforms and political problems also found expression in literature.

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1. See, for example, Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 7, pp. 209-212.

Most profound was the impact of the romantic movement on modern Arabic literature. All of this has been clearly reflected in the contents of Al-Fajr.

The Group believe in the importance of constructive and impartial criticism. In view of the local conditions in the Sudan, where men of letters were not familiar with the idea of public literary criticism and where the critical essay itself was a new form of writing, the Group's endeavours in literary criticism have not been expressed very coherently. But the Group are convinced that a healthy literary movement can only take place in the light of sound and modernistic critical ideas, and it is therefore necessary that criticism should precede any literary output since the latter will have to be based upon and judged by the set norms of the former. It has been concluded that for a start it is essential to create this kind of criticism and introduce it into Sudanese literary life. The urgent task is to lay down the foundations of criticism which is virtually non-existent in the Sudan.<sup>1</sup>

The Group believe that the old criteria which are predominantly concerned with the grammatical and lexical aspects of the language ought to be amended, if not abandoned altogether. The new lines along which literary criticism should be practised must take account of the

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 23, p. 1080.

style of the poet, or writer, and his spirit and way of thinking. These are to be considered in relation to the poet's own age, and its aspirations and sensibility. The critic has been called upon to work in the light of recognized and valid canons of criticism. He should be well read in Arabic and Western poetry.<sup>1</sup>

As far as the Group's literary views are concerned it is apparent that they are mainly concerned with poetry. This is understandable in view of the fact that as a literary genre poetry has established itself as the oldest and most common form of literary expression in the Sudan.

There is a kind of interrelationship between the Group's conception of poetry and their views about literary criticism. It naturally follows that the latter derive from the former, and literary production has been analysed or criticized according to this conception. The following constitute the main features of the Group's conception of the poet and poetry:

In view of his exceptional power of perception and imagination the poet has been conceived of as a poet-prophet. As such his compositions are regarded as the divine inspiration of a highly sensitive soul.

Poetry is required to be true to life and reflect the poet's innermost feelings and the happenings of everyday life. Sincerity and self-expression have become of

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1. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 9, pp. 385-388.

paramount importance to poetry. Among the poets there is a strong tendency to write about personal experiences. As a result poetry abounds in love and nature poems. Panegyrics and occasional poetry have fallen out of favour with the Group. Poetry has become marked by a high degree of subjectivity and lyricism.

In form poetry is no longer bound to the monorhymed or monometric type of the conventional qaṣīda. The poet has come to enjoy much freedom and the presence of more than one rhyme in the poem has become a common practice in poetry. The organic and thematic unity of the poem has been constantly preached and observed by the Group.

The language of poetry is required to be more direct and expressive of the poet's feelings. The poetic diction is markedly simple and straightforward. 'Transparency of expression' is now sought after and the means of attaining it has been described for the younger poets of the Sudan.

The Group's attitude to literary criticism will be analysed in detail in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN EXPOSITION OF THE GROUP'S LITERARY IDEAS AND CRITICISM

Of the various literary questions with which the writers of Al-Fajr concerned themselves, three particular topics may be regarded as representative of the interests of the Group and as being of importance both to literary developments in the Arab world as a whole in the 1930s and to the problem of developing an authentically Sudanese national literature. The first of these, the problem of literary identity and nationalism is specific to the Sudan, while the questions of romanticism and the development of a modern critical theory, are to some extent reflections of a similar debate which was being carried out in Egypt and other Arab countries.

#### A. Literary Identity and Nationalism

##### (1) Early Signs:

The critical works of Al-Amīn 'Alī Madanī and Ḥamza al-Malik Ṭanbal in the mid-twenties were a valuable contribution to literary criticism in the Sudan, especially so in view of the fact that it was the earliest genuine and whole-hearted attempt to apply the new norms of literary criticism to Sudanese poetry. But the efforts of the two men by no means completed the task. Their criticism was a first indication of the course which the

Sudanese literary movement was about to take.

As far as the question of nationalism is concerned it is clear that the two critics made no direct attempt to relate their writings to the call for a Sudanese national literature. But the fact that they insisted that literature should be geared to portraying the natural surroundings of the poet and his everyday life is a clear indication of the critics' awareness of the question of national literature. Further, the title which Ṭanbal gave to his collected essays - Al-Adab al-Sūdānī wa-mā yajib an yakūn 'alayh (Sudanese Literature and How it Should Be) - suggests that he took the existence of a specifically Sudanese literature for granted.

But the fact remains that neither of the two critics made the attempt to discuss or call for a Sudanese national literature. Apparently, Ṭanbal had his own reservations about the issue because of its highly sensitive nature and the political connotations which were inevitably attached to it.

By and large, the way was paved by the two critics, and by the early 30s the call for a national literature had found articulate expression in the writings of the younger generation. M.<sup>6</sup>A. Al-Ṣiddīq, a leading member of the Group, paid attention to the question in the first issue of the magazine Al-Nahḍa.<sup>1</sup> From his article it is

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1. The magazine was launched on October 4, 1931.

to be gathered that the issue was gaining more and more attention from the educated, although at that time the idea had not been thoroughly discussed.<sup>1</sup>

In February 1931 M.A. Maḥjūb published his article Al-Shu'ūr al-qawmī wa-ḥājatunā ilayh (National Consciousness and Our Need for It) in Al-Nahḍa. This was followed by many other articles and the controversy over the matter continued for more than three years. The traditionalists who belonged to the older generation were totally opposed to the idea and became suspicious of its initiators who had been educated in modern secular schools under the influence of Western thoughts and ideas.

The traditionalists composed many poems on this topic, condemning the notion of a national literature and abusing its supporters. They maintained that the move was intended to undermine Islam and Arabic culture, and cut the Sudan off from the rest of the Arab world. The government, which also became suspicious of the call, contributed to increasing the tension between the two generations by sowing in the minds of the older generation the idea that the main intention of their opponents was to undermine their influential and highly-esteemed role in society.

The campaign against the movement was joined by three distinguished traditional poets: 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Raḥmān, 'Abd Allāh 'Umar Al-Bannā and Muḥammad Sa'īd Al-'Abbāsi.

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1. See Al-Siḥāfa al-Sūdāniyya fī Niṣf Qarn, op. cit., p. 127.

Of the many poems composed by the three of them in dispraise of the movement and its propagators, the following poems may be noted for their explicit tone of indignation and sarcasm: Dam'a 'alā al-lugha al-'Arabiyya by Al-Bannā, Al-Fawḍā by 'Abd al-Raḥmān and Al-Mu'tamar by Al-'Abbāsī.

(ii) The Call for National Literature Expounded:

On the 23rd March 1935, nine months after the launching of Al-Fajr, Maḥjūb made the daring attempt to debate the question in a public lecture. At the Omdurman Graduates' Club he delivered a paper under the title: Al-Thaqāfa al-Sūdāniyya Yajib an taqūm bidhātihā Munfaṣila 'an al-Thaqāfa al-Miṣriyya (Sudanese Culture should stand on its own independent of Egyptian Culture).<sup>1</sup> An open debate followed. Maḥjūb's opposer was Ḥasan Ṣubḥī, an Egyptian journalist who was to become the editor of the first daily newspaper in the Sudan.

Maḥjūb has thus provided us with what may be considered as the first serious, and indeed the most important attempt to expound and debate the issue of a Sudanese national culture. In view of this fact it will be appropriate to give a summary of this lecture.

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1. The full text of the paper appeared in Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 18, pp. 857-864.



Mahjūb starts his lecture with a general and somewhat academic introduction. He conceives of culture as the ideal intellectual form of civilization. Its basic elements are knowledge, religion, habits and customs. To him the most appropriate definition of culture may be sought in Socrates' famous aphorism: 'Know thyself'. He believes that culture cannot be limited to a kind of scientific conception of things. It should investigate human behaviour, and concern itself with the social aspect of life. In effect through culture it will be possible to explain the complexities of life and help in putting right every human error. From this he concludes that culture is the way to ideal life, intellectual, spiritual and social. He sees the 'cultured man' as the individual who is capable of using such knowledge to the benefit and advancement of his society.

Mahjūb then moves on to point out the main factors which are bound to influence culture: society, ethics and environment. He stresses the distinct differences between Egypt and the Sudan in all three spheres. Then he raises the question: Is there a purely Egyptian culture? To this he provides a negative answer. He maintains that the writings of the leading literary figures in Egypt have been overshadowed by the influence of Western writers and thinkers. In view of her geographical position Egypt has become an international centre for culture. Hence, the production of Egyptian writers reflects the influence of other foreign cultures. The result is the presence of

a mixture of cultures, and not a distinctly Egyptian culture. He believes that culture will be fruitful only when it succeeds in reflecting the people's customs, their temperament and aspirations.

He concludes by stressing the need for the Sudan to have its own culture and expressing his conviction that it is only logical for the Arab peoples to have a diversity of cultures, and that this should in no way undermine the affinities of religion and language between them. There are certain territorial, temperamental and social differences between those peoples, and hence it is only common sense to believe in the existence of a variety of Arabic cultures. Variation in itself, he maintains, should be taken as a sign of vitality and creativity. The Sudan, which is part of the Arab world, should therefore have a culture of its own, reflecting the traits and customs of its people as well as their intellectual tendencies.

Mahjūb ends his lecture by expressing his conviction that the Sudanese man of letters " will endeavour to create his own literature since the fancies, dreams and aspirations of his people are different from those entertained by peoples in other countries. From the past events of his country, the temperament and customs of his people he shall draw and compose his stories and poems. And in the scenery of his country; its woods, deserts and valleys he is bound to find the necessary

setting for his descriptions."<sup>1</sup>

Al-Fajr had hoped to obtain and publish a summary of the paper which Ḥasan Ṣubḥī, Maḥjūb's opposer, delivered in refutation of the call for the independence of Sudanese culture. Unfortunately, the former, who became noted for his unionist views and the call for a united culture for the Nile Valley, failed to provide the magazine with a summary. But despite this fact, and realizing the importance of the issue, Al-Fajr invited its readers to carry on the discussion in its pages.

It was not a coincidence that a summary of Maḥjūb's lecture appeared in issue number 18 of volume one.<sup>2</sup> A month later the change in the journal's policy and objectives came into force. It may be recalled here that from then on there was an obvious shift of emphasis from the literary side to the social and political spheres.

The debate was reported in Al-Fajr and described as most exciting and interesting. It attracted a big audience and the stormy scenes which followed prevented its organizers from sounding out opinion on the issue. The fact that the organizers had intended to do this clearly indicates how inseparable the question of national literature was from politics. It was reported in Al-Fajr

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 18, p. 864.

2. Dated April 1, 1935.

that the row which followed had echoed around the country. The rest of the Sudanese periodicals were drawn into discussing the subject. Some Egyptian papers took part too. In fact the controversy was merely a reflection of the political turmoil which had been going on in the Sudan. Those who argued that the two cultures were inseparable were associated with the call for unity with Egypt, while those who opposed them became associated with the call for independence from Egypt, in the hope that such a move would ultimately lead to the country's complete independence. The moderates, on the other hand, believed in the logic of having a separate culture which would be identifiable with the Sudanese character, but at the same time they saw the importance of maintaining the close links between the two cultures.<sup>1</sup>

As far as Al-Fajr is concerned many articles on the subject appeared in its pages. According to the chronological order in which they were published they are as follows:

1. Ṣadīqī (vol. 1, issue 3, pp. 131-3).
2. Al-Adab al-Qawmī (vol. 1, issue 4, pp. 164-5).
3. Bayn Miṣr wa' l-Sūdān (vol. 1, issue 16, pp. 724-7).
4. Al-Thaqāfa al-Sūdāniyya yajib an taqūm bidhātihā munfaṣila 'an al-thaqāfa al-Miṣriyya (vol. 1, issue 18, pp. 857-864).

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1. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 22, p. 1040.

5. Bal ta'āwun lā imtizāj (vol. 1, issue 21, pp. 994-5).
6. Al-Adab al-Miṣrī wa' l-Adab al-Sūdānī, khaṭa' al-faṣl baynahumā (vol. 1, issue 21, pp. 1006-9).
7. Al-Adab al-Sūdānī wa' l-Adab al-Miṣrī (vol. 1, issue 22, pp. 1040-5).
8. Bayn al-Adabayn (vol. 1, issue 24, pp. 1138-41).
9. Nidā' ilā al-Uḍabā' (vol. 2, issue 1, pp. 14-15).
10. Limādhā aḥabbanā (vol. 2, issue 1, pp. 41-3).
11. Sha'b yusā' (vol. 2, issue 2, pp. 67-71).
12. Ḥaḍratuh mukhbir (vol. 2, issue 2, pp. 78-81).
13. Muḥimmat al-Ṣiḥāfa wa' l-Ṣuḥufī (vol. 2, issue 2, pp. 92-3).
14. Ḥadhār al-Fitna (vol. 2, issue 3, pp. 133-5).

In order to gain an insight into this important issue it will be desirable to acquaint ourselves with some of these articles. Apparently, Maḥjūb's article - which is a summary of his lecture - has been preceded by three articles by different writers. In article number one the writer has called for true and original literature. This call is reminiscent of the writings of Ṭanbal and Madanī in the mid-20s. Number 2 is the first article to have touched on the idea of a Sudanese national literature. Article number 3 which was contributed by Al-Tijānī Yūsuf Bashīr is an early reminder to the Egyptian men of letters of their ignorance and neglect of the literary movement which was taking shape in the Sudan. In a cordial, yet emotional, manner Al-Tijānī expresses his feeling of disappointment in Egypt's attitude and the failure of its writers to recognize the

rising generation in the Sudan and their endeavours to join the civilized world. He expresses his belief that it will be more useful for the two countries to know and cooperate with one another in the literary field than to confine their relations to the realms of politics and its state of turmoil. The charge of complacency was repeated later on by the editor of the Al-Ādāb wa'l-Funūn section.<sup>1</sup> From articles 10, 11, 12 and 13 it may be gathered that the debate turned into a personal wrangle which was full of abuse. This may be attributed to the lack of an established journalistic code of conduct. In effect the issue was allowed to be discussed in nearly all the periodicals which were published in the Sudan at the time. Furthermore, the atmosphere created by certain writings in Egypt's press was not helpful in developing a constructive and healthy intellectual argument. One example is the article which was published in the magazine Abū al-Hawl. In it the writer expresses the view that the Sudanese people are intellectually unfit for the role of beginning a literary movement on their own.<sup>2</sup> As a result the editor of Al-Fajr wisely decided to put an end to the discussion.

Articles 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are directly related to the subject of discussion. With the exception of number 6 they were all written in support of the call for a Sudanese

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1. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 19, p. 942.

2. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 24, pp. 1138-48.

national literature.

Article number six is worthy of consideration, not only because it reflects a different viewpoint but also because it has been contributed by a prominent Egyptian journalist.<sup>1</sup> Here is a summary of it:

The writer starts by acknowledging the fact that every nation is entitled to have its own literature. But at a certain stage in its literary development a rising nation may find it necessary to rely on the literary output of another nation. This is particularly true of nations with no established literary traditions. In order to create and enrich its own literature such a rising nation will need to copy and borrow from other established traditions. But when it reaches a certain degree of advancement and civilization it will no longer need to rely on the traditions of other nations and hence it will become literarily independent. Egypt has been through such stages in her literary development, and she could not have become independent had it not been for her temporary reliance on English and Latin literatures. Thus Egypt's national literature has come into existence.

The present situation in the Sudan is similar to that of Egypt. The aspirations of the Sudanese rising

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1. The article was written by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Ḥamza who was then the editor of Al-Balāgh.

generation to achieve intellectual independence and create a Sudanese national literature are not only natural but also are worthy of praise and admiration. It is also inevitable that any local literature should sooner or later reach the stage of maturity and independence from other literatures.

Ḥamza thus points out that Egyptian and Sudanese literature should not be regarded as alien to one another. The two countries are actually regarded as one nation and their literatures reflect and complement one another. The writings, for example, of Ṭahā Ḥusayn, Al-Zayyāt or Al-'Aqqād are intended to be read and enjoyed by the Sudanese as well as the Egyptian people. Likewise, this affinity has been reflected in the special attention which the Egyptians pay to Sudanese literature.

This close literary relationship is the clearest indication of the spiritual affinity between the two nations, and it is important to preserve and resist any attempt to sever or undermine it.

The writer concludes by saying that the peoples of the two nations are duty-bound to retain this special relationship, and that they are required to further it by means of bilateral literary exchange. Sudanese literature should be made available in Egypt. The Egyptian reading public can only be expected to acquaint themselves with Sudanese literature when this literature presents itself to them. When this happens they will then be in a position to understand and evaluate it.



Thus literary understanding between the two nations can be achieved.

Article 7 was written in reply to Ḥamza's article. In it Maḥjūb expresses his appreciation of the writer's views and believes that they are worthy of respect because of their sincerity and reason. But there is no indication that Maḥjūb has changed his stand. He reiterates his previous views and points out that he is not opposed to the idea of cooperation between the two cultures so long as that cooperation takes place in an atmosphere of mutual respect. He adds that he sincerely believes in international cultural and literary cooperation.

(iii) Later Development:

In 1941 Maḥjūb made yet another attempt to explain his views on the question of a Sudanese national literature by publishing a pamphlet under the title Al-Ḥaraka al-Fikriyya fi' l-Sūdān: ilā ayn yajib an tattajih (The Intellectual Movement in the Sudan: Where should it be directed). In it he develops the theme of his previous lecture and discusses the question in detail. He is remarkably outspoken in expressing his views and the underlying motives for the idea.

The pamphlet opens with a bitter attack on what the writer describes as 'the reactionary and rigid elements of society.' The writer believes that the presence of such elements will force the modernists into a long struggle before they can achieve their objectives. This

is a reminder that the conflict between the traditionalists or conservatives and modernists was still going on.

The first important point which the writer makes is to underline the separate identity of the Sudanese people and show how they are distinguishable from other nations. The Sudanese character is the outcome of many factors and stages of development. This fact prompts the writer to describe the traits of this character and the racial elements which constitute it. The aboriginal inhabitants of the country belong to the black negroid race. This race has undergone many changes because of the migratory movements which took place over the years. The result is a mixture of races, which fact is attested to by the varying complexions of the present stock of the Sudanese people.

It is not without significance that Maḥjūb has made this point about the racial diversity of the Sudanese people. By so doing he has clearly challenged the dogmatic belief in the racial purity of the Sudanese and their affiliation to Arab ancestry. To state any contrary opinion as Maḥjūb has done was a deed which required great moral courage at the time. Maḥjūb has gone even further by adding that such diversity is bound to have its effect on the mentality of the people, either positively by promoting it or adversely by degrading it.

Thus the basic African element has been unequivocally asserted and the logical conclusion that the Sudanese intellectual make up is an amalgamation of many facets of

cultures, beliefs and traditions has been arrived at. It seems that Maḥjūb's main objective is to refute the common belief that Arabic culture is the sole influence upon Sudanese culture. Nevertheless, the writer acknowledges the prime importance of the Arabic language and Islam. He devotes a whole chapter to explaining the foremost position of the two. But there still remains a major difference between Maḥjūb and his generation on the one hand, and the traditionalists on the other. While the latter wished to preserve the purity of that Islamic and Arabic culture, Maḥjūb was convinced that such a move was doomed to failure and it was inevitable for the Sudanese culture to be influenced by Western culture and civilization. Despite this conviction Maḥjūb insists that the educated should not be allowed to copy this Western culture. What they are required to do is to understand and digest it then adapt its suitable aspects to the Sudanese way of life. Hence Maḥjūb has put a kind of restriction on the use of this foreign culture. But it has also been implied that such restriction is applicable to the revered culture of the Arabs. "This country has been influenced by Western civilization, especially the English culture. It has also been influenced by Arabic culture, notably that of Egypt. But it is to be borne in mind that it has its own nature; its climate and peculiar conditions which are bound to be reflected in the intellectual movement and direct it towards the objectives

which have been set by its loyal and sincere men."<sup>1</sup>

To sum up his views on the issue Maḥjūb raises the questions: What is the high ideal towards which our intellectual movement should be directed? How can we achieve it? To this he answers, "The high ideal of the intellectual movement in this country is to pay due respect to the Islamic faith and its rites and work under its guidance. It [the movement] should assume an Arabic character both in language and taste, seek inspiration from the past and present history of this country, and draw from the nature, customs, relics and morals of its people. Bearing all this in mind it should endeavour to create a healthy national literature. This literary movement should in due course assume a political nature and lead to the country's political, social and intellectual independence."<sup>2</sup>

(iv) Comments and Assessment:

Now that the principal ideas on the question of Sudanese national literature have been discussed, let us make a few observations about the call: its origins and the extent of its impact on Sudanese nationalism.

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1. Al-Ḥaraka al-Fikriyya, op. cit., p. 23.

2. Ibid., p. 37.

It may be appropriate to start with an investigation into the cultural sources from which Maḥjūb and his colleagues drew and find out whether they had been influenced by certain writers. As far as the literary sources are concerned it may be noted that the Group made great use of their reading in Western and Arabic literature in general. The romantics, especially the mahjarī writers with their constant yearning for freedom and revolt against the social system in their homeland, stand out as one of the Group's main sources of inspiration. To that may be added their general reading in politics and political theory which was animated by the political movements which were taking place in the rest of the Arab world and Asia. The struggle for independence which was led by the Indian Congress Party, for example, was a great inspiration for the younger generation of the Sudan. The nearest example of political revival which was worth copying was that of Egypt which attained her independence in 1922. In Egypt, too, prominent and influential writers such as Al-'Aqqād and Al-Māzinī had come forward and championed the cause of Egyptian national literature. They gave an effective lead to the Sudanese rising generation, especially the Fajr group. It is worth noting that the literary and political views of Al-Dīwān were still in vogue in the Sudan in the 1930s. One of the main objectives of the Dīwān school was to try to find the best form to express the genuine Egyptian national spirit, its personality and its identity. The

school realized that the distortion of the Egyptian national spirit was due to the great gap between the official literature of the court, as represented by Shawqī, and the nation.<sup>1</sup>

The Fajr group also drew some of its inspiration from the societies which were founded in Syria and the Lebanon in the 19th century.<sup>2</sup>

At home the literary and political writings of one man in the 1920s seem to have touched a personal chord in the members of Al-Fajr. Ḥusayn Sharīf, the editor of Al-Ḥaḍāra, had greatly influenced the younger generation in the Sudan through his writings in which he reflected his beliefs and aspirations for the future of the Sudan. Maḥjūb was full of admiration for the man and considered him the founder of authentic Sudanese journalism, and a leading figure in modern literary writing.<sup>3</sup> Sharīf became known for the independent stand which he took on the question of the future relationship between Egypt and the Sudan. The series of articles which he published in 1920 under the general title 'The Sudanese Question' had a far-reaching effect.<sup>4</sup> In these articles he

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1. See Moreh, Modern Arabic Poetry, Leiden, 1976, p. 70.

2. See Al-Ḥaraks al-Fikriyya, pp. 42-5.

3. At the ceremony which was held to commemorate the death of Sharīf, Maḥjūb composed and recited a moving elegy.

4. See Malāmiḥ, op. cit., p. 26 and pp. 24-38.

expressed the idea that despite the close ties between Egypt and the Sudan, each country had certain rights and interests which must be respected and maintained rationally. He also stressed the importance of preserving the Sudanese character and called for an end to the Condominium.<sup>1</sup>

It is important at this point to try to explain and assess the magnitude of the call and the contribution which Maḥjūb made towards the cause of nationalism in the Sudan. A leading scholar has hinted that Maḥjūb's endeavours in this respect were only an acknowledgement of a foregone conclusion (taḥṣīl ḥāṣil)<sup>2</sup> 'Abdīn maintains that the poetic works of any Sudanese poet are bound to represent or at least reflect certain aspects of Sudanese life and society. This is partially true, but the observation cannot stand as a general rule, for as far as the neo-classicists in the Sudan are concerned there are numerous poems which are devoid of Sudanese features or characteristics.<sup>3</sup> Further, it seems that 'Abdīn has totally missed

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1. The full text of Sharīf's articles is to be found in Al-Siḥāfa al-Sūdāniyya fī niṣf Qarn, op. cit., pp. 73-86.
  2. This is the phrase which Dr. 'Abdīn has used in his book Tarīkh al-Thaqāfa al-'Arabiyya fi'l-Sūdān, op. cit., see p. 249.
  3. Dr. Al-Nuwayhī has cited many examples from neo-classical poetry in the Sudan to show that a considerable number of poems are lacking in terms of

the political implications of the call which proved to be far more important than the apparent literary objectives. The political aspect is the core of the whole issue. The ultimate objectives of Maḥjūb's call was political as well as intellectual independence. As far as the political aspect of the call is concerned Maḥjūb may well be reckoned as a forerunner. With great perception and determination he realized that literature could not be divorced from the people's life and aspirations. The question of involving literature in politics was inevitable, and despite all the difficulties Maḥjūb accepted the challenge and through his unabated efforts and writings he set the pace and pointed to the direction in which the literary movement should proceed.

Finally, by calling for the employment of literature in the political awakening of the Sudan, Maḥjūb has become the first Sudanese man of letters to have advocated the idea of literary commitment. It is worth noting here that the concept of 'committed literature', i.e. mafḥūm al-adab al-mūltazim, was a late literary development in the Arab world, which gained recognition only after the outbreak of the 1952 Egyptian revolution.

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identity. He maintains that many of these poems could be attributed to any contemporary Arab poet because of their flat character and the absence of any particular or local features by which they can be distinguished. (See Al-Ittijāhāt al-Shi'riyya fi'l-Sūdān, pp. 1-14).



B. Three Romantic Concepts and How they have been Reflected in the Group's Writings:

(i) The Concept of the Poet as Visionary and Prophet:

With the firm establishment of romanticism in modern Arabic literature new literary concepts have evolved. One of them is that of the poet as visionary and prophet. It may be noted at the outset that this concept is by no means entirely new to the Arabic tradition, for long before our modern times the ancient Arabs had held the poet to be a person endowed with supernatural knowledge and power. They believed that he was a wizard in league with spirits or jinn.

Before attempting to trace this concept in the writings of the Group it will be useful to pause for a short while and take a brief look at its development in modern Arabic literature.

The concept was first expounded by I.<sup>6</sup>A. Al-Māzinī in 1915 in an essay entitled Al-Shi'r, ghāyātuh wa-wasā'iluh (Poetry, its objectives and means). This had been preceded by M. Al-Sibā'ī's book Al-Abṭāl (The Heroes) which was a translation of On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History by T. Carlyle. In it Shakespeare was presented as a poet-prophet (nabī al-wahy), with creative genius. This paved the way for an interpretation of Shakespeare as a romantic. Such interpretation was carried further by the writings of Al-'Aqqād, M.Ḥ. Haykal and Abū Shādī, who translated The Tempest. From then on Shakespeare

became known as nabī al-shi'r, or the poet-prophet.

Jibrān, the prominent mahjarī poet and writer, has also played an important part in consolidating this new concept. The Arabic translation of his book The Prophet appeared in 1926. In this book Jibrān has actually assumed the role of a prophet since he speaks like one.

In an unpublished thesis M. 'Abd al-Ḥayy expresses the view that the evolution of this Arabic romantic image of poet and poetry is largely dependent on English romantic theory. It may also be added that traces of such a notion are to be found in the Muslim Ṣūfī poetry.

Nonetheless, it may be assumed that through their readings in Western literature the Arab romantics became aware of this concept. In view of their natural disposition they were bound to be influenced by it, because of its great appeal to their anguished souls. It suited the new ideas and prophecies which many of them entertained. Further, the political atmosphere which was full of repression and persecution must have enhanced the favourable response of Arab literary mind to the idea. Many of them regarded themselves as saviours of the people who were destined to play a great and serious role in society, especially so in view of the state of ignorance in which the vast majority of the people lived. In their state of anguish it was not unnatural for them to tend to exaggerate their role and liken it to a prophetic message.

It may therefore be concluded that the concept of poet-prophet has evolved out of a cross-cultural process.

Let us now trace this concept in the writings of Al-Fajr and see how it has been expounded. Apart from the scattered notes on the subject which appeared in the "Arts and Literature" section of the journal, Al-Tijānī and Maḥjūb may be regarded as the main exponents of the idea. In view of his compelling romantic nature, the former became far more concerned with it than the rest of his colleagues. This has clearly been reflected in the titles of many of his poems, including Allāh, Anbiyā', al-Ḥaqlqa, Qalb al-Faylasūf, Ṭafarat Sāḥir and Fi'l-Mawḥā.

In his article Mushkila adabiyya kubrā Al-Tijānī makes the remark that one important fact about modern Arabic poetry is that "it has begun to assume its role in life as a heavenly language which is no longer bound by human conventional usages. Poets have started to play their role as prophets for whom the doors of Heaven are wide open."<sup>1</sup> Al-Tijānī has distinguished the poet from the rest of the people whose world is bound to be full of evil. To him the close relationship between Heaven and the poet is ever present. One needs to be reminded here of the interchangeable and double meaning of the word samāwī in Arabic. Although it derives from the word samā' (sky) it is usually associated with God and His mighty powers. In another instance poetry has been described as a semblance of heavenly beauty on earth, a gleam of the godly inspiration in the world and a

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 11, p. 499.

heavenly magic power bestowed upon the poet in order that he may unravel the secrets of life which are inexplicable through the means of philosophy and science.<sup>1</sup> In effect, Al-Tijānī has regarded the importance of the poet's message in life as next to that of the prophet's.<sup>2</sup>

From this stems the Group's belief that poetry can only be regarded as a magical world which is exclusively inhabited by and known to the poets. In Majrā al-tafkīr fi'l-Shi'r<sup>3</sup> (Tendency of thought in poetry) Al-Tijānī has used the word enchantment and its synonyms four times in the first five lines of the article in order to describe the nature of poetry. This emphasis on the inspired, or privileged, visionary is typical of romantic thoughts and tendencies. Hence the close relation between poetic experience or the process of literary creation and the poet's soul with its whims and fancies which are constantly enriched by the poetic power of imagination and the extent of the poet's inspiration. Al-Tijānī's bitter attack on the critics of his time is a natural result of his poetic conviction. He maintains that many of them lack this secret and spiritual trait which is essential for the understanding and appreciation of poetry.<sup>4</sup> He regrets

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1. See his article, Fi'l-Mustawā al-Shi'rī lil-Umam, Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 6 (pp. 245-9) p. 245.

2. Ibid.

3. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 17, pp. 779-95.

4. Cf. his article Mushkila adabiyya kubrā, Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 11, pp. 497-501.

that they are unable to understand expressions such as shurb al-ḍaw' (absorption of light), rashf al-ashk'a (sipping of rays) and iltihām al-naẓarāt (devouring looks) and that they dismiss them as unintelligible. Al-Tijānī believes that the failure to understand such expressions has come as a natural result of the critics' rigid attitude and their determination to apply the rules of logic and reasoning to what is essentially spiritual. He asserts that the source of poetry is the soul; and so long as the critics remain adamant in their denial of this important fact it will not be possible for them to pass any valid judgement on any poetic composition. Hence the major problem between the two - critics and poets - remains unsolved.<sup>1</sup> Al-Tijānī's views and those of his colleagues draw from the philosophy of passion, feelings and imagination in arbitrary opposition to that of rationalism or logic and reason. This is one of the underlying concepts of romanticism.

The characteristic feature of unearthliness in poetry has naturally led to greater emphasis on inspiration. Maḥjūb has devoted a whole article to explaining that poetry is a combination of inspiration and craft. In Al-Shi'r ilhām wa-Ṣinā'a<sup>2</sup> he takes a sober attitude to

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1. Ibid.

2. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 5, pp. 189-192.

the question by striking a balance between the importance of inspiration and that of craft to poetry. Nonetheless, it is obvious that he conceives of the former as the basis for any literary creation. "There is a heavenly spirit which evokes in the soul this feeling [for life and beauty] and this is what we call inspiration or visionary... It is the essence and source of poetry."<sup>1</sup>

Al-Tijānī, on the other hand, takes a more romantic attitude to the issue. He holds that it is not possible to assume that poetry is always and by necessity based on ideas. In many instances its composition is the result of sheer inspiration, in which case it will be different from any premeditated poetic practice. In the moments of inspiration the poet's will will suddenly be overcome and poetry will flow into his soul with all the joy of suddenness, which is not unlike prophetic revelations. Thus, as far as the exercise of will is concerned, like a prophet the poet can have no claim to such inspirations.<sup>2</sup>

It is under the spell of such ideas that Al-Tijānī has made reference to al-shu'arā' al-mulhamūn, the inspired poets, in the Arab world who have revolted against rhymes and prosodic rules in order to give a true representation of their inspirations. Apparently he is

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1. Ibid., p. 189

2. Majrā al-Tafkīr fi'l-Shi'r, Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 17  
(pp. 790-5) p. 793.

inclined to regard himself as one of them, and hence his sympathetic attitude to their cause.

(ii) Organic Unity:

The process of literary creation from a romantic point of view is deeply rooted in the feelings of the individual. In any work of literature the essential element of self-analysis is always present. This is what is generally known as 'subjectivity' the degree of which is influenced and determined by the poetic state in which the poet happens to be. This psychological state which conditions the process of literary creation has been described by Al-Tijānī as follows: "When the poet goes into retreat, [for the purpose of poetic composition] he will have prepared himself for the occasion. The state in which he will then be is similar to that of the strings of a violin which are in readiness for conveying the tunes which will be played on them."<sup>1</sup> Al-Tijānī goes on to add that according to this psychological state, and despite the varying strings on which the poet may have touched, the outcome is bound to be one of uniformity and harmony.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that Al-Tijānī has arrived at the presence

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1. Ibid., p. 792.

2. Ibid., same page.

of unity in any literary work through his concept of the psychological condition which he believes is a prerequisite for any literary creation. In other words, it is the psychological state which dictates and conditions the poetic experience. In effect, every letter, collectively or individually, is bound to reflect that original emotion or state of mind. He maintains that for every state or condition there is a corresponding way of thinking in poetry. It is on this theme that Al-Tijānī has based his article Majrā al-tafkīr fi'l-Shi'r.

Thus the concept of unity as an inherent part of any literary work has been arrived at through Al-Tijānī's romantic conception of poetry.

In his article Ḥayrat al-Adīb<sup>1</sup> (The Literary Man's Bewilderment) Maḥjūb expresses a similar view. He describes the highly sensitive nature of men of letters and likens it to the strings of a guitar which readily respond to every touch on them by producing a corresponding sound or tune. This underlines the fact that uniformity is an inherent part in any literary work, and that the original motive (or emotion) for any work of literature will naturally be reflected in that work. It follows that the atmosphere which ensues from that original motive should prevail throughout the poetic

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 14, pp. 613-17.



experience and colour it.

The romantics have been noted for their constant search for an ideal world whose sensibility is based on the enjoyment of the true, the beautiful and the good. One contributor to Al-Fajr writes, "Good poetry should attempt to unravel the searchings of the heart, and express the voice of conscience as well as the hopes and aspirations of an oppressed and deprived nation."<sup>1</sup> This stresses the overriding importance of truthfulness in any good work of literature.<sup>2</sup> Al-Tijānī believes that the aesthetic taste of a nation can be described as good or refined only when this nation begins to recognize beauty as the idol which it worships, and poetry as a glorification of this beauty.<sup>3</sup> A similar view has been expressed by the writer of the Al-Ādāb wa' l-Funūn section (vol. 3, issue 10, pp. 301-2), where it is maintained that to a true poet beauty is an everlasting source of fascination and attraction.

It is within the context of this romantic world

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1. See Al-Ādāb wa' l-Funūn, Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 6 (177-180) p. 178.
  2. Cf. also the article Al-Adab wa' l-Hayāt (literature and life), Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 4 (pp. 142-5) p. 142.
  3. Fi' l-Mustawā al-Shi'rī lil-Umam, Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 6 (pp. 245-9) p. 245.

(which is based on truthfulness, beauty and goodness) that the Group have also come to consider the question of unity, and stressed its importance in any work of literature. At the outset, and in the first issue of the journal, one member of the Group has expressed his concern about the absence of unity in many contemporary poems.<sup>1</sup> Another contributor has regarded unity as a prerequisite for any successful work. "The literary man should observe unity in his work and adopt a direct approach to his subject so that he may succeed in conveying his message in his own way and not according to the wish of other people."<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that the writer here has linked the question of unity with that of independence and freedom in literature. There is, indeed, a close relation between the two, for when the literary man is free from outside influences which may be imposed upon him by certain moral or social considerations, he will then be able to concentrate on the original idea or emotion which has inspired him and set the process of literary creation in motion. Hence, in the absence of distracting factors or diverting thoughts it will be possible for him to achieve uniformity in his work. Further, the phrase 'direct approach' implies continuity and coherence in the

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1. Al-Fajr, volume 1, issue 1, p. 11

2. Muthul 'Ulyā lil-Hayāt al-Sūdāniyya al-Muqbila,  
Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 10, (pp. 423-7) p. 426.

work of literature.

But the question "How did the Group relate the question of unity to the high ideals of truth, beauty and goodness?" still remains to be answered. According to the romantic concept these high ideals can be taken to represent God, since He is the source of every truth, beauty and goodness. It follows that the three may symbolize the unity of God. This notion has found expression in the works of the Muslim Ṣūfī poets. Furthermore, Abū Shādī, the leader and founder of the Apollo group, has expressed the same view and come to the conclusion that all parts of the universe are related to one another by means of love.<sup>1</sup>

As far as the Group are concerned it may be assumed that they have been influenced by such ideals as that of Abū Shādī. In addition, they have been guided by certain aesthetic views. Drawing upon these views they have come to conceive of beauty in its entirety and in complementary forms. According to this conception they maintain that in order to appreciate the beauty of a woman, for example, one will need to take account of not only her physical figure but also the manner in which she talks and the way she behaves. What is significant is the fact that this integrated outlook has been reflected in their literary

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1. Cf. Badawī, A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry, Cambridge University, 1975, pp. 116-129.

conception as well. Beauty to them includes the tangible and material as well as the intangible and immaterial:

"This conception of beauty has dictated the literary norms which we apply. We consider any literary work as a whole and not as fragmented parts. We have no inclination to the kind of criticism which concerns itself with one single line in a whole poem. We are more inclined to look for the uniform idea which underlies the poem from start to finish and the chain of thoughts which runs through it."<sup>1</sup> A poet can be proclaimed by them as successful in his work only when he has mastered the unity of his poem and clearly expressed his ideas.<sup>2</sup> Further, his language should be correct and the music must be in tune with the theme and meaning of the poem. "It is this outlook which concentrates on the overall effect of a literary description and not the description itself and pays more attention to the uniformity of the poem than to its fragmented parts, which has made us far less interested in photographic descriptions and guided us to look for the essence of beauty, that is its effect and the emotions or feelings which it evokes in us."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Mawt Dunyā, p. 64.

2. Ibid., same page.

3. Ibid., same page.

It is against this background that the Group have come to consider Al-Tinay's lines in description of a smile as the most subtle description:

تبسم فان ابتسامك عذب      يزيل الهموم وينفي الكدر  
تبسم تبسم لكيأ أحرار      وكما أغار فلا أستقر<sup>1</sup>

The poet here has concerned himself with the overall effect of the smile and not the smile itself. The pretty smile of the beloved is bound to overcome all signs of care and boredom, and cause the lover to be jealous and restless.

(iii) Ambiguity

Al-Tijānī conceives of poetry as an aesthetic craft similar to that of jewellery and engraving. Nonetheless, he believes that enchantment in poetry is one of its unique features. According to him, the roots of inspiration go deep into the dark corners of the soul which is full of unrestrained imaginations and fancies and whims.<sup>2</sup>

In Majrā al-Tafkīr fi 'l-Shi'r, where he attempts to describe modern Arabic poetry, he points <sup>out</sup> ~~at~~ the visionary or symbolic aspect which has become one of its distinctive

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1. See Al-Fajr, vol. 2, issue 1, p. 20 and the preface to Dīwān Al-Tinay, (pp. 7-14) p. 10.
  2. See Mushkila Adabiyya Kubrā, Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 11 (pp. 497-501) pp. 498-9.

features. Through his readings Al-Tijānī has become aware of and acquainted himself with visionary poetry<sup>1</sup> which has direct bearing on the question of ambiguity in poetry.

In all four articles which he contributed to Al-Fajr Al-Tijānī has shown constant concern with the question. This fact may prompt us to raise the question: Why was he particularly concerned with ambiguity in poetry? His interest in the matter was personal. It is to be recalled that Al-Tijānī was attacked by the critics and some of the reading public of his time for the inclusion of obscure and, sometimes, unintelligible expressions in his poetry. Despite this fact his main intention was not to refute this charge. Rather, it was to try to understand the causes of obscurity by way of explaining the real nature of poetry.

A cursory look at what was written on the subject in Egypt - the Group's greatest literary stimulus - will help us to place Al-Tijānī's views and those of his colleagues in their right perspective. Among those who wrote on the subject were Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Khalīl Hindāwī, Shawqī Dayf and

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1. Apart from the writings which appeared in the literary magazines in the Arab world, such as Al-Risāla, Apollo and Al-Siyāsa al-Uṣbū'iyya, Al-Tijānī became particularly aware of its presence in Ṣūfī poetry of which he was fond.

'Abbās Faḍlī Khammās. They all agreed in considering ambiguity as an inherent quality in poetry. In their writings they were mainly concerned with explaining and justifying its presence. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn attempted to expound and reflect on the views of Paul Verlaine on the subject. Drawing from the French poet, the writer maintains that the excellence of poetry should not only be attributed to its meaning but is also to be sought in its expressions and forms, in its fascinating metric measures, and in the way it overwhelms the soul and evokes in it a kind of joy far greater than that created by any known music. Further, the merits of good poetry are to be found in its many shades and images.<sup>1</sup> As regards obscurity and clarity Ṭāhā Ḥusayn asserts that clarity is not one of the fundamentals of good poetry and that excellent poetry may well do away with it.<sup>2</sup>

This was followed by a translation of Verlaine's poem The Mariners' Graveyard by Khalīl Hindāwī. The poem was introduced as a specimen of good poetry whose fascination lay in the mysterious atmosphere and obscure ideas which it contained. Hindāwī also expressed the conviction that such a kind of poetry was bound to enrich ~~Arabic~~ <sup>Arabic</sup> modern poetry through its symbolic expressions.

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1. See the newspaper Al-Ayyām, Khartoum, issue dated 5.5. 1978, pp. 7-8.

2. Ibid., same pages.

Shawqī Dayf, similarly, insists that obscurity is one of the main attractions of poetry and argues that the fascinating and ever-lasting beauty and effect of poetry may well be attributed to the inherent quality of ambiguity.<sup>1</sup>

In his writings Al-Tijānī tends to agree with the views which have been expressed by the leading Arab writers on the question of ambiguity. In part he must have been influenced by these views. Nonetheless, it will not be fair to assume that he acted as a mere recipient of the ideas current in his time. His deep concern with the problem and his personal involvement in it must have provided him with a greater insight into it. In his writings he has shown a considerable degree of creativity and originality.

Al-Tijānī's views on the subject are mainly contained in his article Majrā al-Tafkīr fi 'l-Shi'r.<sup>2</sup> But before

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1. Ibid., p. 8. Dayf also attributes the presence of ambiguity to the inexplicable nature of the soul of the individual. Cf. his book Dirāsāt fi 'l-Shi'r al-'Arabī al-Mu'āṣir, (2nd edition), Dār al-Ma'ārif, Egypt, 1959, p. 250.

2. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 17, pp. 790-5.



that he made some important references to the question in Mushkila Adabiyya Kubra.<sup>1</sup> In it he notes that modern Arabic poetry is markedly full of sadness, emotional penetration and ingenuity of expression. He maintains that the keen observer will not fail to notice the remarkable flow of fancies and images in this poetry and its obvious and frequent breaks with the Arabic tradition.<sup>2</sup> He also underlines the inseparable relationship between emotion and poetry which is overwhelmingly influenced by the soul and emotion of the poet. Further, he believes that the taste, emotion and the senses are the mainsprings of poetry. Hence, the diminishing role of the mental faculty in the moments of poetic inspiration.

Even earlier than this Maḥjūb had made certain remarks which touched on the subject. He describes poetry as follows: "In view of its radiant nature and the different implications and shades of meaning which it contains poetry has been reckoned as a most profound experience whose meanings are hidden well beneath its apparent descriptions and expressions."<sup>3</sup> Maḥjūb likens the effect of poetry to that of photography, in that within the space of two lines of verse one would be able to convey what

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 11, pp. 497-59.

2. Ibid., pp. 498-9.

3. Al-Shi'r Ilhām wa-Ṣinā'a, Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 5, (pp. 189-192), p. 190.

might otherwise need to be written in tens of lines of prose. To him poetry derives its unique nature from being brief and profound; that is, the conciseness of its words and the profundity of its meaning.<sup>1</sup>

By this remark Mahjūb has touched on the core of the problem, for brevity is one of the fundamentals of poetry. Hence the tendency to use allusions or suggestive expressions.

Let us turn our attention to the article Majrā al-Taḥkīr and see how Al-Tijānī, the leading exponent of the idea of ambiguity in poetry, has explained it and justified its presence.

There are three main points on which Al-Tijānī has based his argument:

1. Symbolism and Concentration of Thought

Al-Tijānī believes that there are two types of ambiguity: that of the symbolic language and that resulting from deep and concentrated thought. The poet usually resorts to the former either when it becomes difficult for him to express himself or when the ideas themselves are obscure because of the inexplicable nature of the soul, the source of every poetic expression. As for the latter, deep thought will result in brevity which is in turn bound to cause ambiguity.

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1. Ibid., same page.

"Thought in poetry tends to be summarized in a few words, for if it were to be let free it might well fail to achieve what is normally attained through brevity which is laden with an accumulation of vivid and lively descriptions. I mean to say what can be achieved in poetry through the means of a few eloquent expressions may not be achieved by prolonged and detailed explanations and descriptions."<sup>1</sup>

2. The Hidden Tunes:

Shawqī Dayf paid special attention to the musical aspect of poetry and its effect on the reader. He notes that when at its best this kind of music will move the audience, or readers, and lift their hearts despite the fact that they may fail to comprehend the actual meanings of a poem. The great joy derived from reading or listening to poetry can only be attributed to the mysterious tunes which poetry contains.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Tijānī has a deeper insight into the musical aspect of poetry. He points at the presence of two types of music: the mental or implicit (al-mūsīqā al-ma'nawiyya) and the literal or explicit (al-mūsīqā al-ẓāhira). The former may be obscure or difficult to realize, but to him

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1. Majrā al-Tafkīr fi'l-Shi'r, Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 17 (pp. 790-5) p. 791.

2. Al-Ayyām, op. cit., p. 8.

it is one of the basic elements of poetry. In his mind Al-Tijānī conceives of the presence of an implicit music which is commonly confused with the explicit music of poetry. "It may be difficult for the reader to understand what we call the implicit spirit and the hidden rhythm, but it is a fact which is not at all imaginary, which exists not beyond the wording but beyond the real meaning."<sup>1</sup> He believes that when the reader penetrates deep enough, "he will be able to realize that beyond every rhythm there lies another meaning and beneath every meaning another rhythm is to be discovered."<sup>2</sup>

It is this concept of poetical music which has led Al-Tijānī to call for a certain degree of prosodic freedom for the poet: "The need for new tunes [i.e. metres] must have been felt by the modern poets at one time or another."<sup>3</sup> As far as metres are concerned, he believes that the door should be open to the modern poets so that they may venture into new and 'unheard of' themes and metres whenever they are urged by the poetic thought (al-fikr al-shā'ir) or any new experience.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Majrā al-Tafkīr fi 'l Shi'r, op. cit., p. 793.

2. Ibid., same page.

3. Ibid., pp. 790-1.

4. Ibid., same pages.

3. Differences in Taste:

Al-Tijānī was fully aware of the question of individual aesthetic tastes and how literary appreciation was bound to be affected by them. To him the inevitable differences in taste and temperament are mainly responsible for the rift between the poets and critics of his time. "It is only true to observe that when the understanding of things is based solely on taste many differences [between individuals] are bound to emerge."<sup>1</sup> For, when the individual attempts to judge a matter it is his psychological makeup, culture and temperament which are essentially reflected in his judgement. In effect it is always possible for the reader to fail to understand a poem or parts of that poem, and hence the question of vagueness and obscurity will arise. This fact prompts Al-Tijānī to call for a new kind of literary criticism which will keep pace with developments in modern Arabic poetry and its new and complex tendencies. He maintains that such tendencies, including obscurity, are a distinctive feature of our modern time with its mysterious, and sometimes symbolic way of thinking. An example of this is the poet's tendency to draw from nature and closely relate it to his character, or his inclination to express and describe private experiences and feelings by the

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1. Mushkila Adabiyya Kubrā, op. cit., p. 499.

means of suggestion, implication or association. Hence the emergence of a new way of poetic thinking and the inevitable presence of obscure phrases and vague ideas.

C. Literary Criticism:

(i) Theoretical Aspect:

At the outset it must be pointed out that the Group did not succeed in laying down any specific standards according to which a literary work might be judged. Despite this apparent lack of coherent and organized critical canons the Group seem united in their general conception of poetry and literature.

There are two main factors which seem to underlie the Group's critical outlook:

1. They are opposed to the traditional method of literary criticism, mainly because it confines the critic to the linguistic and rhetorical aspects of the work. In his article Wājib al-Udabā' Nahw Ummatihim wa-Fannihim<sup>1</sup> Maḥjub has noted that the traditional critic was mainly concerned with the question of grammatical correctness or soundness. Beyond that he can only be expected to look for ornamentation and rhetoric.

Unfortunately, this was the method which prevailed in Arabic literary criticism until well into the 20th century.

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 9, pp. 385-8.

The Group aspired to a kind of criticism which would lay greater emphasis on the essential, i.e. the content of poetry, and pay less attention to the superficial. They believed in a new critical outlook which would take account of the poet's or writer's style, his spirit and his way of thinking and relate all these to the age in which he lived. In his article Mushkila Adabiyya Kubrā Al-Tijānī expresses a similar view on the matter. He notes that the old critics limited their efforts to minor issues such as whether the poet's meanings had been explored before, poetic diction and the presence of obscure or undesirable expressions or grammatical and linguistic irregularities. Both writers called for the adoption of a new critical approach.

Through his Arabic reading Al-Tijānī acquainted himself with some of the literary trends in the West. He became aware of the special attention which Western men of letters paid to their literary heritage and how in their studies they started to explain and analyse the classics and search for new areas of interest and ingenuity in them. To his dismay, he realized that there was no sign of any similar attempt in the Arab world. He believed that great poets including Ibn al-Rūmī, Mihyār and Abu 'l-'Alā' could have been studied in a new light and that the adoption of a modern approach to their works would have benefited the literary man and helped him to understand those poets and appreciate their ability and poetic genius more fully.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Cf. his article Fī 'l-Mustawā al-Shi'rī lil-Umam, Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 7, (pp. 293-6), pp. 294-5.

In other words, Al-Tijānī believed in and called for a new critical outlook which would be useful not only in studying modern Arabic literature but also in generating a new life in the classics. By describing and analysing these classics, searching deep into them and taking account of the spirit of the age in which the poets lived, new areas of ingenuity would be discovered and great joy would be derived.

Four weeks later Maḥjūb returned to the subject and wrote, "A study of poets like Al-Mutanabbi', Al-Ma'arrī and Ibn al-Rūmī which will describe their poetic talents, their way of thinking, the spirit of their age and their private life will enable us to arrive at their philosophical views and introduce them in an attractive way."<sup>1</sup> He believed that such an attempt would render an invaluable service to the Arab nation.

2. Fundamental to the Group's literary criticism is the question of truthfulness (or al-ṣidq al-fannī). Most of them were convinced that literature must be true to life. Hence the frequent use of words like honesty, truthfulness and sincerity. Indeed such words and epithets seem to have inspired many of the Group's critical writings. The idea of a Sudanese national literature, for example, was initially based on the conception of literature as a true

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1. Wājib al-Udabā' Naḥw Ummatihim wa-Fannihim, op. cit., p. 386.



reflection of the life and surroundings of the poet or writer. Further, the major differences between the neo-classicists and the modernists, as represented by the Fajr group centred on the question of honesty and genuineness.

It is to be noted that the emphasis on genuineness is commonly associated with lyrical poetry and the romantics who are inclined to write about their personal experiences and feelings. The school of Al-Dīwān took a similar stand. Al-'Aqqād and Al-Māzinī had an artistic conception of life and believed that literature should have a close resemblance to life.<sup>1</sup> Maḥjūb maintained that literature was part and parcel of life. "It is part of it [of life] drawing from it and merging into it. True and lasting literature is what touches on and derives from life. Hence the striking similarities between real life and the work of literature, so much so that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish one from the other."<sup>2</sup> Not only is literature a reflection of the individual's life, but also it is a representation of past and present human experiences. This is so because no work of literature can hope to attain any degree of excellence without relying on or drawing from the experiences,

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1. See Al-Ṣiddīq's article on Al-Māzinī, Al-Fajr, vol. 2, (pp. 77-82) p. 80.

2. Al-Adab wa' l-Hayāt, Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 4, (pp. 142-5), pp. 142-3.

observations and lessons of the past. "The work of a poet is a reflection of his own experiences, amorous, ethical and political, in close association with those of his society, including his contemporaries and predecessors."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the individual character of every man of letters and its presence in his work has been asserted. While past and present experiences continue to provide him with the necessary background to his work, his own private life remains as the core of this work.

The Group believe that the main objective of literature is to help people enjoy life and appreciate beauty. Literature should as well endeavour to improve the quality of life. They maintain that the literary man is duty-bound to be honest in his writings and should first try to listen to the voices of his own conscience before attempting to appease others. Maḥjūb realizes that such an obligation will require a high degree of artistic dexterity from the literary man who should always perfect his language and strive to give a clear expression of his views on life. This is the only means by which he can play his role in life and achieve the main objectives of literature.<sup>2</sup>

These ideas bring to mind the question of literary

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1. Ibid., p. 144.

2. See Wājib al-Udabā' naḥw Ummatihim wa-Fannihim, op. cit., p. 388.

freedom. Maḥjūb clearly implies that men of letters should have a right to express their own beliefs. He sees them as the saviours of the people and believes that any attempt to impose set ideas upon them will prove to be futile and a waste of their time and efforts.<sup>1</sup>

In the article Muthul 'Ulyā lil-Ḥayāt al-Sudāniyya al-Muqbila<sup>2</sup> the writer has outlined what he considers to be the basic features of any literary creation. From this article, and some other scattered remarks, it may be gathered that the Group were on the whole agreed on certain criteria of criticism. In any good work of literature the writer, or poet, would be required to reflect or demonstrate the following:

- (a) A power of perception and observation.
- (b) An ability to draw conclusions and to justify them.
- (c) An ability to express his ideas clearly and beautifully.
- (d) An originality of thought and ingenuity of exposition.
- (e) An ability to portray his surroundings and society.
- (f) High ideals by which he is guided.
- (g) A mastery of organic and thematic unity.

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1. Ibid., same page.

2. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 10, pp. 423-7.

(ii) The Practical Aspect:

Through their critical writings Muḥammad 'Ashrī Al-Ṣiddīq and Muḥammad Aḥmad Maḥjūb have rendered an invaluable service to the Fajr movement. Their efforts in this respect clearly stand out from those of others. Apart from personal aptitude and calibre, the two men have succeeded in reflecting the common tendencies and beliefs of the Al-Fajr movement. Hence, it will not be inappropriate to reckon them as the representatives of the Group. Let us first outline the general features of their criticism and then have a close look at a few specimens of it.

M.<sup>6</sup>A. Al-Ṣiddīq:

The writings of Al-Ṣiddīq are marked by deliberation and carefulness. In effect, it seems that he lacks the enthusiasm, warmth and glitter of Maḥjūb. Nonetheless, in his essays Al-Ṣiddīq has demonstrated his abilities as a literary writer. His outstanding qualities are: deliberation, polished language and independence. Underlying all these is the writer's scientific character with its scholarly and learned attitude. The fact that he was an ardent reader not only of Arabic literature but also English and Western literature in general must have helped to provide him with the solid intellectual background which he has. This fact has been recognized by many Arab

scholars.<sup>1</sup>

Under the influence of the English critics Al-Ṣiddīq adopted the analytic method in his literary criticism. This has been reflected in his two-part essay on Al-Māzinī. In his writings he has also reflected certain features which may well be attributed to Al-‘Aqqād, the Group's acclaimed literary idol. Al-Ṣiddīq's tendency to use splendid and grand style and structurally balanced passages bears close resemblance to the writings of Al-Aqqād. But there are, of course, some basic differences between the two. While the latter became noted for the daring and unreserved manner in which he made comments and passed judgements, the former resorted to a conscious and somewhat restrained attitude to his criticism. This attitude suited the sober and unbiased critic which he hoped to be. Nonetheless, the quality of independence remains as one of the distinctive features of Al-Ṣiddīq's writings.

M.A. Maḥjūb:

The most distinctive feature of the writings of Maḥjūb is his artistic and intellectual originality. As far as the artistic aspect is concerned it may be discerned from the new form and style in which he endeavoured to combine the eloquence of the Arabic language with the

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1. Prof. ‘Abd Allāh Al-Ṭayyib, for example, has pointed out that Al-Ṣiddīq is an extremely widely read man. (Al-Ittijāhāt al-Ḥadītha fi' l-Nathr al-‘Arabī fi' l-Sūdān, op. cit., p. 64)
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fluency of English. Originality of thought has been reflected in the high ideals which he has set up for himself and his society in the fields of literature, politics and social advancement.

From the articles which he contributed to Al-Fajr, as well as in his early writings in Al-Nahḍa,<sup>1</sup> Maḥjūb's qualities as a writer may be analysed as follows:

1. Arrangement of thoughts and ideas: Maḥjūb has shown constant awareness of the form of his articles. The layout of these articles looks good and convincing. The sections are usually well divided and each of them tends to express or discuss a single idea or a number of closely related points. Within the section, it is obvious that the sequence of thoughts and development of ideas is carefully observed. Further, the sections are kept in close relation to one another. This has been achieved through the observance of a gradual and logical movement between them. Hence continuity of thought is retained and the underlying idea (or ideas) is present throughout the article. 'Abd. Allāh Al-Ṭayyib believes that Maḥjūb has been influenced by the style of the English controversial

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1. See, for instance, his article Al-Shu'ūr al-Qawmī wa-Ḥājatunā Ilayh, Al-Nahḍa, issue dated February 24, 1931.

essay.<sup>1</sup> The fact that at the Gordon Memorial College Maḥjūb and his colleagues were trained in this kind of writing may well serve to support this assumption.

2. The special attention which Maḥjūb has paid to form is coupled with a tendency to balance his sentences and weigh one of them against the other. This feature is one of the essential ingredients of Arabic literary writing and of the eloquent style which the Arab modern writers have set out to achieve. Its best example is to be found in the writings of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn.

3. Another feature is Maḥjūb's tendency to detail his ideas. In many instances this has caused him to drift away from the main point of discussion. But it is his disciplined nature as a writer and his vigilant mind which have guarded him against the potential danger of being carried away and losing sight completely of his arguments. The side issues on which he may touch or the detailed examples which he draws are indulged in as far as they are useful in explaining or fostering his arguments.

4. Maḥjūb's style is also marked by a tendency to use long sentences. One sentence may run into five lines or

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1. Cf. Al-Ittijāhāt al-Ḥadītha, op. cit., p. 53.

more. This feature is commonly attributed to the English style, more so, perhaps, than it is associated with the Arabic language. This has led to the overwhelming presence of antitheses and syntheses.

As for his general attitude to criticism, Maḥjūb has become noted for the frank and direct approach which he has adopted in his writings. But in view of his tender and kind nature he sometimes sounds apologetic in his remarks. Kindness and courtesy, when coupled with impartiality, seem to provide a sound basis for any valid and acceptable critical judgement. This was specially true of the Sudanese literary movement in the 1930s.

#### Common Features of their Criticism:

1. In their critical essays the two men have paid special attention to the individual character of the writer or poet. Their concern with his individual character is not limited to biographical accounts, for in addition they endeavour to penetrate into that character by describing and exposing features or traits which are likely to influence his literary production. They have also paid attention to social background.

Examples of this are to be found in the opening sections of the articles on Ṣāliḥ 'Abd al-Qādir, 'Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāḥā and Abū al-Qāsim Ḥāshim by Maḥjūb and the two-part essay on Al-Māzinī by Al-Ṣiddīq. In his first critical



essay<sup>1</sup> Maḥjūb has set out to describe this Sudanese contemporary poet in a beautiful, yet penetrating, manner: Ṣāliḥ has an anguished soul. This has resulted from a life full of hardships and misfortunes. He has failed not only in his personal relationships but also in politics. Maḥjūb acknowledges that he has no intimate acquaintance with the poet, and hence makes the remark that he had to seek the necessary information about him from his close friends. This remark highlights two things; the critic's honesty and his endeavour as a modern researcher to establish his facts before publishing them.

In his second article, Al-Mallāḥ al-Tā'ih,<sup>2</sup> Maḥjūb realizes that he is in a similar situation, for he lacks the necessary information about the Egyptian poet. He feels at a loss since he is convinced of the importance of an introductory note which will help in creating a kind of relationship between the poet whom he intends to discuss and the reader. But the writer, who is not lacking in ingenuity, has found a way out by introducing the poet as an architect, a profession which the two of them share. By this means of identification Maḥjūb moves on to describe the close relationship between the concept

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1. Ṣāliḥ 'Abd al-Qādir Shā'ir Yanquṣuh al-Fan<sup>h</sup>, Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 1, pp. 14-20.

2. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 3, pp. 104-108.

of architecture as an art and that of poetry as a branch of literature. He makes the remark that common to both are the qualities of strength, beauty and economy.

Al-Ṣiddīq has adopted a similar attitude in his essay.<sup>1</sup> He starts his critical study by describing the character of Al-Māzinī and relating its traits to his poetry. He maintains that the poet reflects very clearly the true Egyptian spirit, not only because he is a native of Egypt but also because in his poetry the Egyptian character with its distinctive traits has been closely portrayed. By way of giving a general description of the Egyptian character Al-Ṣiddīq has penetrated into the individual character of Al-Māzinī, whose poetry has been marked by a kind of perpetual yearning for the past and its memories. The poet has been described as light-hearted, sincere and peaceful.

The significance of these brief introductory parts lies in the fact that they serve to introduce us to the poet or writer in question in a direct and humane manner. As such they are bound to create a kind of relationship between the poet, for example, and the readers of his poetry. This relationship is by no means superficial since the critic tries to deepen it through his analytic

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1. Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Qādir Al-Māzinī

(i) Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 2, pp. 77-82.

(ii) Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 3, pp. 90-102.

descriptions. In this way, and from a psychological viewpoint, the reader will be prepared to associate himself with the poet and try to understand his literary production in the light of the information which he has gained about his individual tendencies and personal life.

2. One technical aspect of this criticism is the critic's tendency to start with a general rule or remark and move on from there to a particular point or question. The writer will usually give a general account or picture of the literary work pointing to its distinctive features. This may include an outline of the themes which happen to dominate the poet's production or hints at certain areas of interest, weakness or excellence.

After a brief introductory note, Maḥjūb, for instance, has pointed out the prominent aspects of Ṣāliḥ's poetry. There are four; reflecting his sadness and boredom, his comic and cynical character, his adoration of beauty and his dissipated life. The diversity of the poet's themes and metres has been considered to be one of the merits of his poetry. But amidst this early praise for the poet the writer does not forget to refer to the charge to which he has already alluded; that is the poet's apparent lack of perfection which has resulted from his careless attitude to the process of literary creation.

It is to be noted that while making these general observations and remarks Maḥjūb has made no attempt to go into great detail. This has been postponed for a later

stage when he embarks on a detailed study of specific examples. By this means Maḥjūb has been able to delay his conclusions until he has substantiated his arguments and explored them in depth.

The same procedure has been followed by Maḥjūb in his article on 'Alī M. Ṭāhā, where he starts by making the general remark that the title of the poet's collection<sup>1</sup> does not reflect any aspect of Egypt's nature. By this remark the writer intends to point at the presence of foreign cultural elements in Ṭāhā's poetry, particularly that of English poetry. This early remark has prompted the writer later on to raise the question of truthfulness in poetry.

Following his introductory section on Al-Māzinī, Al-Ṣiddīq raises the question of the poet's identity and wonders whether he may be assigned to the traditional school or the modern one. In his attempt to answer this question the writer has been able to shed light on the main areas of interest and significance which he intends to study. Similarly, the observation that the poet has not succeeded in creating any new forms or metres is significant in that it points to one of the areas with which the critic intends to concern himself in his study.

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1. That is Al-Mallāḥ al-Ṭā'ih, or the Lost Mariner, the first edition of which appeared in 1934.

This technique is of great importance to the Group's literary criticism. It has helped to provide it with the organized form which it possesses and hence enhanced its understanding and contributed towards a better exposition of their ideas.

3. The impartial attitude which the critics have adopted is perhaps best reflected in their commitment to a fair treatment which not only focuses on the weaknesses of the literary work but also takes account of the poet's achievement and recognizes and praises the merits of his work. It is worth noting here that the critical remarks which Maḥjūb makes are always characterised by an apologetic tone. This stems from his peaceful and kind nature and explains why in his articles he is inclined to start with commendation rather than criticism.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, let us consider certain examples of their criticism which will help to illustrate their impartiality and shed light on the areas of emphasis in this criticism.

(a) Maḥjūb is critical of the opening part of one of Ṣāliḥ's pessimistic poems. He maintains that the poem should have started in a more emotional manner in order to arouse the reader's sympathy. Maḥjūb has composed four lines and suggested that they will serve as a more

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1. See, for instance, his article on Ṣāliḥ.

appropriate prelude to the theme of the poem. By this suggestion he has clearly demonstrated how practical he is. What is important is the fact that Maḥjūb mingles this early critical remark with a kind of praise when he recognizes that as a whole the poem is full of genuine and true feelings, and that Ṣāliḥ has succeeded in reflecting his pessimistic nature.<sup>1</sup>

(b) Another critical remark which Maḥjūb makes is that the poem in question has been composed in a disorderly manner and hence displays a lack of relationship between its parts and images. Further, the rhythm sounds somewhat tedious and is in effect less moving.

Maḥjūb cites another example which gives evidence of these failings. In this instance too he tries to sweeten his criticism by suggesting that the poet's own misfortunes and his great concern about the state of his people may have hindered the process of organizing his thoughts and ideas.<sup>2</sup> Then in a didactic manner he reminds Ṣāliḥ that a true poet should combine inspiration and imagination with craftsmanship, and that he should continually revise and polish his compositions.

(c) Then the critic moves on to consider the merits of Ṣāliḥ's poetry. He points out that the poet has excelled

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 1, p. 16.

2. Ibid., p. 17.

in love poetry, and commends him on his polished style, the beauty of its musical aspect and the tender quality of his descriptions. Maḥjūb also maintains that the poet provides us with some of the best examples of love poetry in the Sudan. His judgement has been based on two important factors: that the poet has adopted an immaterial<sup>istic</sup> approach to his themes and that he has succeeded in reflecting his genuine feelings and deep emotion.<sup>1</sup>

(d) The areas of emphasis in Maḥjūb's criticism are demonstrably consistent with the Group's literary ideas. In his article Al-Mallāḥ al-Tā'ih he makes yet another attempt to stress the importance of music in poetry. He is critical of Ṭahā because his metres are repetitive and monotonous. Maḥjūb has discovered that sixteen out of the thirty three poems which the collection comprises are in one metre. He asserts that this overwhelmingly repetitive 'tune' is one of the drawbacks of the collection. The poet could have avoided this had he tried to exploit his potential, especially in view of his knowledge of English poetry and the different tunes which it contains.<sup>2</sup> This brings to mind Maḥjūb's positive stand on the issue of modernizing and enriching Arabic poetry and his belief

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1. Ibid., p. 19.

2. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 3, p. 108.

that such an objective may be achieved through borrowing from Western literature, especially English poetry.

(e) Maḥjūb also blames the poet for his lack of sincerity. To him it is shameful to write about far-fetched ideas while the problems of one's country remain to be solved and its local scenery remains to be described. This, again, raises the questions of truthfulness and literary commitment.

(f) Ṭāhā has also been criticized for being carried away by his imagination. The writer believes that in many instances this resulted in absurd and incredible ideas. He cites the poem Millād Shā'ir (A Poet's Birth) and observes that despite the grandeur of its style it has been marred by excessive imaginations which have gone well beyond the boundaries of reason.<sup>1</sup>

(g) Another criticism of Ṭāhā is his lack of economy. It is worth recalling that Maḥjūb and his colleagues have regarded brevity as one of the prerequisites of poetry. The tendency to compose lengthy poems has resulted in much resonance and clatter, which in turn led to verbosity in Ṭāhā's poetry.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid., p. 106.

2. More than two decades after this criticism of Ṭāhā, Shawqī Dayf repeated the same charge against him. (Cf. Dirāsāt fi 'l-Shi'r (2nd edition) Dār al-Ma'ārif, Egypt, 1959, pp. 195-211).



(h) Maḥjūb ends his critical survey by focussing on the poet's merits. He notes that the scientific nature of the poet has clearly been reflected in his poetry. As a result a considerable number of his poems are marked by deep reflection. This element of reflection which is combined with the poet's profound emotion has contributed to the excellent quality of lyrical poems which the collection contains. The poet's adoration of beauty has also been noted by the writer and his poems on love and its anguish and sorrows have been reckoned as most beautiful and enjoyable, especially so because the poet has succeeded in reflecting his tender feelings and the resounding memories of the past.

(i) One of the current issues of the time was the question of traditionalism and modernism in Arabic literature. Maḥjūb shows his concern with this question in his study of Ṭāhā. He attempts to answer the question whether Ṭāhā is to be regarded as a modern or a conservative poet by weighing the elements of modernism in his poetry against those of traditionalism. Al-Ṣiddīq has adopted a similar method in his study of Al-Māzinī. The two critics have also expressed identical views on the question of introducing new metres into Arabic poetry and the possibility of deriving or modifying them from the metres of English poetry.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Cf. Al-Ṣiddīq's article on Al-Māzinī, Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 2, p. 80.

(j) In his two-part essay Al-Şiddīq has also paid attention to the question of unity and organization. He also recognizes Al-Māzinī's great ability to compose narrative poems; and in view of the orderly sequence of events and the flow of imagination in these poems the critic has described them as worthy of praise and admiration.

(k) One of the main demerits of Al-Māzinī is the apparent lack of proportion between the different parts of his poetry.

Thus, as representatives of the Group, Muḥammad 'Ashrī Al-Şiddīq and Muḥammad Aḥmad Maḥjūb may be said to reflect its common tendencies, beliefs and preoccupations in their literary criticism. The areas of emphasis in this criticism and their critical approach are not only similar but also seem to conform with the Group's literary conceptions and expectations.

## CHAPTER V

### AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE GROUP'S POETICAL WORKS

#### I. Subjectivity:

A remarkable feature of the poetical works of the Group is the presence of a strong element of subjectivity, an element which underlies nearly all their compositions. Through it the poets tend to express their own experiences, their response to others, including nature, and their metaphysical speculations. Hence the abundance of poems of introspection, confession or poems which record a mood, usually one of anguish and despondency. An explanation of this underlying element is therefore of essential importance to the understanding of this poetry. Two questions may be raised in this respect, and by answering them it is hoped that an explanatory account of this strong element of subjectivity will result. The questions are: (i) What are the factors which were responsible for the spreading of this subjective tendency? (ii) Why were the Group particularly prone to it?

The impact of outside influences upon the Group has been underlined many times in this study. It has also been pointed out that the modern literary movement in the Arab world played a considerable part in shaping the Group's literary thoughts and ideas. But the most profound single influence which left its unmistakable mark on them is that of the Diwān movement. The leaders of this

movement attached great importance to the part played by emotion in poetry. Under the spell of the English romantics, they advocated a kind of poetry which was primarily of a subjective nature. Al-‘Aqqād, for example, maintained that what distinguished a poet from the rest of men was the strength, depth and wide range of his feelings, and his ability to penetrate in the reality of things.<sup>1</sup> One member of the Group has expressed a similar idea, "A true artist is the one who attempts to realize his high ideals and objectives in life through the expression of his own experiences."<sup>2</sup>

Subjectivity and individuality are two distinctive features of romanticism of which Al-‘Aqqād and his colleagues were among the early exponents. By the early 30s the romantic movement had taken hold of nearly all the Arab world, and through the mahjarī writings and the publications of Apollo it reached a climax. As far as the Fajr group are concerned it may suffice to note that they were contemporaries and, to a certain degree, close associates of the Apollo members. Hence, they were naturally influenced by the strong currents of romanticism. Further, and as has been pointed out in an earlier chapter,

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1. Badawi, A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry, p. 91.
  2. Mawt, op. cit., p. 49.

the Group had direct access to foreign cultures, and many of them became particularly acquainted with the English romantic poets and critics.

Notwithstanding the outside impact on the Group it is perhaps more important to look into their own circumstances and consider how far the prevailing conditions in the Sudan influenced them and enhanced their individualistic and introspective attitude to life and literature. Reference has been made to the tension between the older and younger generations, which had become clearly apparent by the 1930s. More serious were the repercussions of the 1924 rising and the pressures which were brought to bear on the Sudanese rising generation, including the Fajr group, who found themselves at odds, not only with an essentially alien and repressive government, but also with their own people, including their parents and elders.

Further, at the socio-cultural level the Group seem to have been drawn into a psychological battle, a kind of internal crisis within themselves. This crisis was brought about by the new system of education under which they were trained, the new ideas to which they were exposed and the sharp contrast between these and the actualities of life and the limitations of their own society. In effect a few of them became social rebels, while the majority kept their modern ideas and those pertaining to religion and tradition in separate watertight compartments, and sustained a kind of split personality. The method and content of the training they received at the Gordon Memorial College, which

was Western in outlook and approach, had exposed their minds to greater ephemeral distraction, but left their spirits hungry. One should also bear in mind that the members of Al-Fajr were mostly effendis, i.e. government employees, and that while their social environment restricted them totally, through their education, private reading and the shared experience of government service they acquired a wider outlook which made them realize the constraints of their social and family life and left them subject to conflicting loyalties, desires and aims.

The conflict which resulted explains the state of perplexity in which they found themselves. The educated person might seek modern medical treatment which had become available in the big cities and towns, but he would not be able to resist his family's persuasions to visit a feki. He might show an attitude of agnosticism one day in the presence of his close friends and join the crowd in defending religion the next. In many instances he was forced to assume a double character in his life, daring to criticize the old ways only within his circle and fearing the censure of his elders. Hence he found himself reduced to a state of intellectual cowardice.

In view of their highly sensitive nature, the high ideals and hopes which they entertained and the unfavourable conditions in which they found themselves, the Group were even more inclined to subjectivity and speculation. In most cases they forced themselves into retreat and detachment from the harsh realities of their life. Sentiments of

suffering, bewilderment and disappointment found their way into their compositions. Thus the greater part of their poetry became centred on their private world, reflecting their anguish and sorrows. They set out on what may be described as an inward journey, in search of peace and consolation.

The fact that the predominant themes of their poetry are those of love, nature and lamentation highlights the underlying element of subjectivity. But although their lyrics were mainly an expression of their innermost feelings, it is easy to discern in them allusions to injustices and predict upheavals in the social and political life of the country.

## II. Main Poetic Themes:

### A. Love:

Love is the foremost theme of this poetry. The preponderance of love poems is indeed most remarkable, as over eighty per cent of the Group's compositions revolve round the subject of love, reflecting the personal feelings and experiences of the poets.

This is not surprising in view of the underlying element of subjectivity. To the Group love represents an oasis. "The best and most tender part," writes one of them, "of what the Arabs have composed is to be found in their love poetry, where their literary talent has been urged and inspired by the passion of love."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 9, p. 266.

They are convinced that poetry in particular is bound to become immortalized when it is centred on the emotions of the soul and its fancies. To those critics who attacked the Group and criticized its members for the preponderance of love poetry in their compositions a writer in the Al-Ādāb wa'l-Funūn section has this to say, "Those critics seem to overlook the fact that this poetry has been composed by the younger poets and that youth is the time of exuberance and passion..... It is more appropriate to leave them [the younger poets] to themselves and enjoy their songs, the echo of spring."<sup>1</sup>

More emphatic is the explanation and justification which has been contained in some of their poems. In a poem entitled Ḥadīth ma'a Shaykh<sup>2</sup> M.ʿU. Maḥjūb explains in explicit terms why he and his colleagues have become attached to the world of love. They have been forced to abandon their political and social endeavours in the face of strong opposition from their elders. To them the world of beauty and love represents a haven where they can get some peace and temporarily forget their troubles before awakening to the realities of a life full of greed, deceit and injustices.

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 10, p. 302.

2. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 8, pp. 241-243. See Appendix, citation no. 1, p. 282



In the poem Qaḍiyyat al-Alwān<sup>1</sup> M.A. 'Umar provides us with yet another poem expressive of the attitude of the younger poets towards love and beauty and how they have been fascinated and attracted by it. It is interesting to note here that this wonderful world has been described as the ka'ba, i.e. the holy shrine, around which Muslim pilgrims continuously throng.

It may be concluded that love poetry provided an outlet for the Group. In their love poems, which are essentially an expression of their repressed feelings and desires, there is an undertone of discontent and a revolt against the political and social inhibitions of their time.

Taken as a whole these love poems cover a wide range of emotions, varying from the most passionate adoration of beauty, to pure platonic idealization, from the joy and excitement of meeting the beloved to the utter despair of loneliness and disappointment, from total surrender to love and immersion in its pleasures to doubt and jealousy in the absence of the beloved. What is new about this poetry is the fact that in contrast with traditional love poetry, through it many of the poets have given expression to a new kind of sensibility, a sensibility which we encounter in the equally large proportion of love poetry

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 1, p. 13. See Appendix, citation no. 2, p.283

in the works of Ibrāhīm Nājī and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Shukrī, the two noted Egyptian romantics. In the poetic compositions of the Group, as in the works of the two latter poets, love has become the context in which so many of the poet's attitudes, such as his sense of exile and isolation, the dreadful thought of death, the state of bewilderment as to the place of man in the universe and his fate, are revealed.

### Aspects of Love Poetry

#### (i) The Passion of Love:

Many of the Fajr poets have attempted to describe the deep emotion of love. Of the many poems which have been studied the following provide us with compositions of a particularly high quality: Al-Zawra<sup>1</sup> (The Visit), Yā kull mā atamannā<sup>1</sup> (O! You Are All I Could Wish For), Dunyāya al-jadīda<sup>1</sup> (My New Found World) and Ilayk<sup>1</sup> (To You) which have all appeared in the collection Al-Shabāb al-Awwal by Muḥmūd Ḥamdī. From the anthology Qisṣat Qalb mention should be made of the poems: Bu'd wa-qurb<sup>2</sup> (Parting and Meeting) and Khafqat Qalb<sup>2</sup> (A Heart Beat); and from Dīwān Al-Tinay: Hubb wa-ghufrān<sup>3</sup> (Love and Forgiveness), I'lān hubb<sup>3</sup> (Declaration of Love) and Tabassam<sup>3</sup> (Do Smile).

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1. Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, pp. 69-71, 73, 145-6 and 147 respectively.
  2. Qisṣat Qalb, pp. 39-40 and p. 82 respectively.
  3. Dīwān Al-Tinay, p. 57, 133 and 55-6 respectively.

Those which have appeared in Al-Fajr include: Jayashān (Flare Up), vol. 3, issue 9, p. 282; Ma'dhirat al-Sāhī (An Excuse for the Inattentive), vol. 1, issue 17, pp. 802-4; Al-Qalb al-'āqq (The Disobedient Heart), vol. 3, issue 3, p. 80; Awadā'ā? (Is it a Farewell?), vol. 2, issue 1, p. 24; Ilā Qalbī (To My Heart), vol. 3, issue 6, pp. 172-3 by the poets M.A. 'Umar, Khalaf, M. U. Maḥjūb, Mīmān and Najīla respectively.

Let us examine some of these poems and see how far the poets have succeeded in conveying the intensity of their passion.

In the poem Awadā'ā<sup>1</sup> Mīmān attempts to describe the feelings of anguish and sorrow which he experiences before parting with the beloved. The poem consists of three sections of uneven length. In the first, which consists of five lines, all of which start with the exclamatory word awadā'ā the poet conveys to us his feelings of disbelief and surprise when he suddenly realizes that the hour of separation has come. "Is it really a farewell?" he exclaims, "even before the thirst of my loving soul

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 2, issue 1, p. 24. This poem is reminiscent of two different Arabic translations of the poem Ae Fond Kiss and Then We Sever by Robert Burns, cf. Appendix, citation no. 3, pp. 284-5

has been quenched? Are we parting while my heart is still unsatisfied and my wishes are unfulfilled?" Then the poet is totally overcome by his emotion, and under the obsession of parting he tells us that the very sound of the word 'wadā' is bound to kindle the fire of love and evoke the deepest feelings of yearning in him. He wishes that the word never existed in the Arabic vocabulary.

In section two the poet attempts to foresee the future by portraying the state of loss and despondency which he is bound to pass through during the period of separation with his loved one. The beloved will have disappeared and so too will the poet's hopes. There will be no trace of her except the resounding echoes of his cries after her. He will then be like a ship roaming the seas, and while his beloved will look like a rose by the morning he will have been exhausted and worn out as a result of his constant wanderings in search of her.

In the last section the poet awakes from the nightmare of separation to the reality of parting. In a prayer-like manner he addresses his beloved and beseeches her to stay with him, for his tender heart has started to beat fast although she has hardly moved a yard! "No, no parting shall take place," he cries desperately "lest the whole world will be lost." The lover then requests another last kiss to make up for their unavoidable separation and the times of longing and sorrow. He wishes once more that it was the hour of meeting and not separation.

The poem Jayashān<sup>1</sup> describes a different experience. The poet here reflects the feelings of joy and fear regarding a new love affair in which he is about to indulge. He addresses his heart and exclaims on its enthrilling beats. From past experiences he has gained good knowledge about his heart and the implications of such beats. But despite this he chooses to enquire about them in the most evocative and interesting manner. He starts with a series of exclamations: What good news do you have for me my beating heart? Your beats remind me of the anguished bird. But do tell me whether they are signs of relief for my anxious and care-laden soul, or whether you intend to extinguish the fires of love, heal my wounds and comfort the sleepless eyes. Then the poet realizes that it is only one of these illusions to which his heart is susceptible. His heart is eternally weak and that is why it always emerges from its sorrows and failures to cling to yet other renewed hopes of love and happiness. "How frequently you have been exalted and brought down by these hopes! How numerous are the instances in which you have created such a new and exciting world!" By nature the heart is inclined to forget its miseries and forgive those who have caused them.

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 9, p. 282. See Appendix, citation no. 4, pp. 285-6

But despite his fears the poet gives in to the fascinating idea of a new love affair. In a tone of consent he addresses his heart once more. "You my heart are never care-free, and the fire of love is continually rekindled in you. For you are inevitably bound to be attracted by beauty. Weak as you ever are you always extend a hand of welcome to every new-comer."

The last two lines of the poem are most expressive of the attitude of the poet and his friends to beauty. In them he proudly proclaims that they are eternally destined to sing for the beautiful and fill the entire world with their songs whenever they set eyes on it.

I'lān hubb<sup>1</sup> is a poem of a different theme. Although the expression of the passion of love remains the underlying tone of the poem the poet's intention is to uncover the secret of his heart and make his long-hidden secret known. The poem has been dedicated to the beloved, "The one who does not know, but who may be delighted to know about this affair!"

It is worth noting here that the act of declaring or making public any love affair is bound to arouse strong feelings in the Sudan, especially so in view of the many moral and religious restrictions which society imposes on such relationships. In order to understand the poem fully

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1. Diwān Al-Tinay, p. 133. See Appendix, citation no. 5

and appreciate the atmosphere of secrecy and tension which prevails in it, it is therefore important that we bear this particular situation in mind.

The two words with which the poem opens, hawā and sirr (love and secret) are the keynote to the poem. The poet's love has long remained a secret of the heart, and its revelation has been guarded against by fear of embarrassment and censure. But to retain the secret is beyond the poet's power of endurance.

The poet describes how he has struggled to keep the secret of his heart. Years have passed and neither have the lips uttered a word nor have the eyes betrayed that strong emotion. It has not even met the ears of others through a whisper. The lover has kept his secret even from himself, despite his awareness of the fact that every vein in his body has been thrilled by it.

The delineation of the state of fear reaches a climax when the poet complains, "How great was my fear that others might discover the secret of my passionate love, yet how difficult it has become for me to withstand its burning fires! The lover has even tried to avoid meeting his own beloved one because of his fear that his passion may betray him.

In the last five lines the poet gives in, for he can no longer keep his secret. His inmost soul has failed to contain his strong passion. His poetry has first betrayed him and through it he has uncovered his secret love affair. The dark nights, too, which have witnessed the poet's

torment of longing and sleeplessness must have imparted the knowledge to the loved one.

The poem closes on a philosophical note: Man is mortal but over the ages the epic story of love will remain alive.

In his relatively short poem Ilayk<sup>1</sup> the poet Ḥamdī provides us with another example which is charged with the passions of love. Despite the simplicity of its language, the poem conveys the poet's most profound emotion. He starts by addressing his beloved one and relating to her the story of his great attachment to and love for her. She has become the sole attraction for his eyes and ears. He begs of her not to mistake him for a happy man, for the smile he puts on is only a forced one. The only feelings and thoughts he entertains are those of his burning passion for her.

The poem ends in a devotional manner, with the poet showing his total submission to the beloved: Whether you are oblivious of my love for you or an other affair has swayed your heart, I do forgive you. I have never forgotten you. Nor shall I dare to blame you if I perish in the fires of my passion.

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1. Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, p. 147.; Appendix, citation no. 6, p. 288



(ii) Adoration of Beauty:

This is another remarkable feature of the Group's love poetry. What is important here is the new concept of love and beauty to which the members have given expression. Under the influence of the romantics the Group adopted a new philosophical outlook which approaches religion and the arts from an aesthetical angle.

To the romantics who are in constant pursuit of the high ideals of truth, beauty and goodness, love is a driving force. But these high ideals in their absolute forms can best be conceived as a few of God's attributes. Hence the close relationship between the romantic concept of beauty and religiousness. He who loves or seeks the high ideals of beauty is in point of fact a true lover of God who recognizes and appreciates His creation.

One of the early Sudanese critics who reflected this combined concept of beauty and religiousness is Ḥamza al-Malik Ṭanbal, who believed that literature might be considered as a sound basis for piety. Apart from actual worship, he maintained, literature could serve as a means through which mankind could be guided to a better understanding of the universe and hence come to realize the existence of God.<sup>1</sup>

As far as the Group are concerned it is to be noted that the religious tendency present in their love poetry

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1. See Al-Adab al-Sūdānī wa-mā Yajib an yakūn 'alayh, (2nd edition), Beirut, 1972, p. 38.

is mainly attributable to the impact of religion on its members. Most of them came from a religious background. Maḥjūb and 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, for example, were brought up in a religious home. Al-Tijānī came from a family which was noted for its religious and Ṣūfī tendencies. He also received his education at the Omdurman Islamic Institute.

Nonetheless, this religious impact is not reflected in the Group's compositions in any traditional manner. There are no traces of exhortations, nor are there any signs of a return to the glorious past of the Muslims. It has been reflected in a new philosophical outlook which combines the basic element of religiousness with that of aesthetics.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the literary influence on the Group which came mainly from Egypt and the West, one should be reminded of the local influences, notably those which pertain to Ṣūfism. The Ṣūfī tendencies and beliefs are deeply rooted in Sudanese society. Further, many of the poets of Al-Fajr, including Al-Tijānī and Al-Tinay, took a keen interest in the Muslim Ṣūfī poets and their poetical works.

The theme of love has thus acquired a spiritual and, sometimes, semi-platonic aspect. Notably, the songs of beauty became laden with many Ṣūfī idioms and imageries.

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1. See Tārīkh al-Thaqāfa al-'Arabiyya fi'l-Sūdān,  
op. cit., p. 264.

As a result of this new concept many of the poets became inclined to go beyond the sensuous. Love has become an idealized world where many metaphysical questions can be raised. Through their description of human beauty the poets have aspired to arrive at a new sensibility which will uplift their souls, give them greater powers of perception and provide them with everlasting peace. Hence in many instances the physical description of beauty can be interpreted as a means to an end, that is the realization of God's presence and His spirit which has been bestowed upon His creatures. With poets like Al-Tinay it is the effect of beauty on their souls and not its sensual appeal which they are inclined to describe or seek to reflect in their poetry.

There is a considerable number of excellent poems which serve to illustrate the Group's overwhelming tendency to describe beauty and its fascinating effect on the poet. Let us consider some of them.

The first example is a highly lyrical poem entitled Ghannī aw laylā 'alā al-Shāṭi'.<sup>1</sup> The theme is one of devotion and attachment to beauty. The poet relates how, one night, in the company of his beloved one, he plunged into the pleasures of love and became totally absorbed in them.

In the opening section of the poem the poet urges

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1. Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, pp. 25-9; see Appendix, citation no. 7, pp. 288-9.

the beloved (the bulbul) to carry on singing and ignore the blame of the reactionaries. The loving soul will never tire of listening to the enchanting songs of love, for they will help to sustain his passionate yearning. To the poet love is a creed. The fascination and effect of the beautiful eyes is similar to that of alcohol, yet it is sweet and free from harm.

In sections 3 and 4 a certain degree of hedonism can be discerned. Singing quenches the thirst of the soul and cures its illnesses. The beloved is urged to go on filling the lover's cup, for it is continuous drinking which drives away solicitude and boredom. In an ecstasy of delight the lover beseeches his beloved one: Come dance for me, you are only comparable to the sun. Come and revive my joyful hopes. Your Creator, who has bestowed such beautiful eyes upon you, has not deemed the pleasures of youth as sinful.

Then in section 4 the poet exclaims: Is it out of vanity that God has filled the earth with such pleasures and beauty? Have we not been endowed with eyes and lips for the sole purpose of appreciating beauty?

The poem closes with another explicit expression of the poet's belief that earthly pleasures should be seized when the opportunity arises as they only occur at rare moments in life.

The poem Asīr<sup>1</sup> provides us with an interesting account of how the poet has fallen captive to beauty and how he

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1. Diwān Al-Tinay, p. 46-7. See Appendix, citation no. 8, p. 290.

rejoices over being captured by the charms of his beloved one. Through the subtle use of a simile - in which the poet-lover has likened himself to a bird and the beloved to a huntsman - the poet has succeeded in making his account vivid and lively.

The huntsman who is usually the object of blame for his alleged cruelty to animals has neither been cursed nor censured. On the contrary, despite the traps which he has skilfully set up, the captured bird, that is the lover, blesses him and prays for his wellbeing! What is more, the captive asks that the trap be tightened up so that he cannot escape! The traps are only those of beauty and its attractions, and the lover is quite content to remain in the fetters of charm, chanting praises for the beloved. His imprisonment by her is all he could wish for. Thus he has no reason to envy the birds their freedom. His heart tells him that in the bosom of love there is all the beauty and joy one could dream of.

A distinctive feature of the poem Khafqat qalb<sup>1</sup> is the poet's tendency to use religious idioms and imageries in description of beauty and the particular effect it has on lovers. It is also important to note that the poet has conceived of beauty and the realization of God as two closely related matters. The charm of the eyes has been described as evocative to the senses and fascinating to

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1. Qissat Qalb, pp. 82-3. See Appendix, citation no. 9, p. 291.

the beholder's eyes. In these eyes lies the secret of life and the beholder is bound to realize God, the Creator, through them. The lover has been described as a monk (rāhib) whose job it is to look after beauty and worship it. To the thrilled heart and fascinated eyes the glittering charm and elegance of the beloved is God's light which is intended to guide mankind. To be in the company of the beloved is like being in Paradise.

In the poem Jamāl wa-qulūb<sup>1</sup> Al-Tijānī has expressed his adoration in the most passionate manner. The opening words wa-'abadnāk yā jamāl, O beauty we have worshipped you, is strikingly reminiscent of the many āyas, or parts of āyas, of the Koran in which the faithful believers express their submission and devotion to God through the means of worship.

In the first three lines an overwhelmingly religious atmosphere has been created. In seeking to express his passionate attraction to beauty the poet tells us that he has worshipped it. Through his poetry he has given expression to his deepest feelings of love. The entire world has been offered as a sacrifice at the altar of beauty.

It is interesting to note that the eyes are of particular attraction to the Group. Hence the springs of water have been included in the offering so that they may

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1. Ishrāqa, p. 115. See Appendix, citation no. 10, pp. 291-2.

correspond to the glittering eyes of the beloved.

Sweet and beguiling though the effect of beauty is reckoned to be, to the poet it has been a means to transcending the everyday world.

In the two verses which follow the poet tells us how difficult it is to explain the essence of beauty. All human endeavours have been in vain.

Then through a series of leading questions the poet underlines the inseparable relation between love and beauty and expresses his belief that man is eternally doomed to be fascinated by beauty. The realization of these facts will lead us to believe in God, the Omnipotent, whose power and will has dictated these facts and made things and human beings look the way they do.

In the last four lines the poet gives expression to the Group's integrated outlook on beauty, the different forms of which are not confined to human beings. To the beholder beauty is present everywhere and its various forms and shades can be found in the tranquility of nature as well as in the clamour of everyday life.

(iii) Feelings of Anxiety and Expectancy:

Here the poet attempts to describe the anxieties of lovers and the state of unrest and disorientation in which they find themselves. While waiting to meet his beloved, the lover's feelings and thoughts are those of hope and fear.

Many of the poets of Al-Fajr have contributed

excellent poems in this vein. The moral and social restrictions which society imposed on the relationship between man and woman must have subjected their liberal minds to greater pressures and made them more sensitive to such situations.

One example in which the lover's state of doubt and anxiety has vividly been depicted is the poem Shakk (Doubt).<sup>1</sup>

In the first three verses the poet has succeeded in creating an atmosphere which suits the theme of his poem. Doubt has been described in terms of darkness, which impedes visual and mental perception. The lover has been likened to a ship sailing on a rough sea whom high tides have prevented from coming ashore. This picture has been intended to correspond to the lover's state of expectancy, a state of ephemeral hope and despair.

Thus the scene has been set, and the poet moves on to delineate the situation by addressing his fu'ād, i.e. his inmost soul: Woe to both of us when we are in such a state of doubt [as to whether the beloved will keep her promise and meet the lover at the appointed hour] In the night I keep on searching for her in the hope of seeing the image of the one of whose arrival you seem so sure. How many times have you been carried away by your thoughts

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 22, p. 134. See Appendix, citation no. 11, pp. 292-3.



and imaginations! Whenever a shadow appears your triumphant cry will ring in the air, but only to the disappointment of your own illusions. You will then ask for my pardon as if I ever blamed you.

The break of dawn is a clear indication that doubt has lifted. Then the rising sun is likened to the smile of an angry face, i.e. the face of the dismayed lover, and the whole poetic experience seems like a dream, a nightmare in which doubt has haunted the poet-lover.

The theme of the poem 'Awāṭif<sup>1</sup>' is similar to that of Shakk but in the former the emphasis is slightly different. Here the memories of love have been revived in the heart of the careworn and sleepless lover. Night has always been the time of remembrance. Wherever the lover goes the memories of his love, with all the joy they give and the anguish they cause, seem to haunt him.

But how about the meeting of lovers after a period of separation and longing? How does the infatuated lover feel in such a situation? Here is the poet's account:

When your voice meets my ears, it is my inmost soul which first welcomes you, even before I set eyes on you. How great is the joy of our hearts when we meet after a few days separation! But how surprising it is that when they are all alone, absorbed in their joyous whispering, the lover tends to become forgetful of his past worries.

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1. Diwān Al-Tinay, pp. 42-3. See Appendix, citation no. 12, pp. 293-4.

The speech they indulge in and the captivating smile of his beloved one make the lover lose his senses. Thus in the bosom of love he falls into a beautiful trance from which he wishes he would never awake.

Sā'at intizār<sup>1</sup> is a poem which provides us with another example of the poet's ability to portray the mixed feelings of those lovers who wait anxiously for the appearance of their beloved ones at the appointed time. The language of the poem is remarkably simple. But it is through this simplicity that the poet has succeeded in giving a truthful account of the lover's state of doubt and hope.

To his sweetheart whom he expects to meet, the waiting lover conveys his passionate feelings and tells her of his longing for her. But some suspicion still lurks in his mind. His thoughts have been described as disturbed (qaliq al-khawāṭir). This description is indeed a subtle one, for the adjective qaliq has been used to describe, not a person as it normally does in Arabic, but the thoughts and feelings of the lover.

The lover's restless movements are comparable to those of a lunatic. Impatient as he is, the lover starts to question the precision of his watch and wonders whether something has gone wrong with it, for he fears that it may

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1. ~~Al-Shabāb~~ Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, p. 128. See Appendix, citation no. 13, p. 294.

have been affected by his burning and infectious emotion of love. To his cigarette he feels most grateful, since by burning in his trembling hands it seems to have shared with him the fire of love! But alas! Even the cigarette looks more fortunate than himself, for while it is doomed to die once by burning itself into ashes, the lover knows that he has been, and will be, through the torments of waiting many times.

In a society like that of the Sudan lovers do not feel secure. Even when they are together stealing moments of joy and happiness they are bound to be haunted by the thought of possible separation. This idea has found expression in one of Maḥjūb's poems. In the last part of Bu'd wa-qurb<sup>1</sup> the poet has reflected the anxiety of lovers and the constant fear of parting which tend to mar their happy times:

Is it true that we will be separated by the cruel time and the treacherous days? How great is our fear of the distress which will be inflicted upon us and the idea of brooding over what will be our joyous past! O my hope, how dreadful is the future and the looming thought of separation!

Then addressing his beloved he says:

Come to my side. You are the dream of my life which has come true. Let us enjoy ourselves and quench

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1. Qiṣṣat Qalb, p. 39-40. See Appendix, citation no. 14, p. 295.

the thirst of our souls. Love is an oasis in our barren life. Come and let us enjoy the pleasures of love and forget the rest of the world.

(iv) Nostalgic References to the Past:

There is a strong tendency in the Group's love poetry to reflect on the past and revive its beautiful memories in the hope of forgetting the miseries and desolation of the present. A remarkable feature of this poetry is the intensity of the poet's feelings, his unceasing yearning for the beloved, the happy times he spent in her company and the places which they used to frequent.

A considerable number of poems will present themselves for illustration. Let us consider three of them.

The first example is a poem entitled Al-rawḍ al-kharib<sup>1</sup> (The Desolate Garden). Despite its length<sup>2</sup> the poem is highly appealing. This has been achieved through the interplay of dialogue and narration, a technique for which the poet Khalaf became noted. The rosy picture of the past has been brought home by means of a close association between the poet and the song-bird. Further the changeable rhyme has contributed to sustaining the reader's interest and excitement throughout the poem.

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 21, pp. 987-9. See Appendix, citation no. 15, pp. 295-7.

2. The poem consists of forty four verses.

In his state of estrangement and loneliness the lover starts to wail over the past and wonder about the gathering of lovers and the places which he used to frequent with them. By choosing to associate himself with the song-bird which was also a close companion who witnessed the meeting of lovers and their happiness, the poet has ingeniously described his recollections of the past. Like the poet-lover the bird has been forced to desert her little loved ones. But because of her great longing for them she has frequently made the journey back to see them and hence acquaint herself with the garden once more. The news which the bird brings back is heartbreaking. The garden has been deserted, and time has ruined it. The company of lovers have dispersed, although whenever they gather together, they will remember the estranged companion, i.e. the poet-lover, and drink to his memory.

Like the lovers all the other birds have flown away and dispersed, leaving their chicks behind. They have started a new life which is full of anguish and eternal longing. This fact seems to give the estranged lover some kind of consolation and sympathy. But despite this the feeling of sadness and discontent with his fate can never be overcome. He wishes that the bird would come and settle down beside him to share his sorrowful days instead of her unceasing flights.

Similar nostalgic references are to be found in the second and penultimate sections of the poem Waqfa 'alā

dār.<sup>1</sup> With the passage of time the joyful hours have been reduced to mere memories, which only evoke sorrows and tears and remind the poet of the dew-moistened trees among which he and his beloved spent their happy times. Happiness and merry laughter have given way to sighs and lamentation, and the flow of tears has replaced the beautiful songs of love and adoration. The poet has been cast away from the paradise of love into a state of isolation and humiliation. He is but a haggard being tormented by his yearning and seared by his passion.

In the last section there is yet another attempt to personify the past and describe its pleasures.

Past memories have been evoked in a remarkably novel manner in the poem Fi' l-ṭarīq<sup>2</sup> (In the Street). The poet here chooses to revive the past by means of describing a street with which he has close associations. The street and its signs are still recognizable to the lover despite the lapse of time. The memory of a certain house and the light which used to glitter through one of its windows is still alive in his mind. It was a time of love and joy. He can still recall the figure of his friend who used to roam the street late at night in the hope of being allowed into the house to join the company and share their merry

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1. Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, pp. 33-7. See Appendix, citation no. 16, pp. 297-8.
  2. Qisṣat Qalb, pp. 53-4. See Appendix, Citation no. 17, pp. 298-9.

and joyous hours.

But whether the street recognizes him after these twenty years or not he cannot tell. What he is certain of is the fact that the house is still there, with the memory of its dim light, and the whispering and happy laughter which used to echo in the air.

Faithful and hopeful lovers will always cherish this beautiful memory, and if only the clock of time could be put back the longing and sad lover would be happy once again.

B. Nature:

Closely linked with the theme of love is nature poetry. Under the influence of the new literary ideas and concepts, which are mainly romantic, the Group developed a wider outlook on beauty. To them the boundaries of love are no longer limited to the admiration of human beauty. They are intended to include nature. The Group became aware of the attractions of the natural features around them. This awareness has been reflected in a considerable number of pastoral poems which abound in descriptions of local scenery such as mountains, valleys and rivers.

In nature many of them have taken refuge from what they regarded as a world of greed, hypocrisy and deceit. In her bosom they have sought a retreat which will provide them with a kind of privacy and peace and comfort their burdened souls. This tendency seems to suit their meditative nature and the philosophical outlook which

they adopted on life in general and the uncertainty of their future in particular.

To a certain extent this inclination to nature has been reflected in the book Mawt Dunyā. To the co-authors of the book the village is the symbol of a virgin and unspoilt life, as opposed to the city with its corrupt practices. "Have I not," writes one of them, "found inspiration in the village.... where the simple people with their clear consciences and genuine enthusiasm are to be found! Have I not been inspired by the humbleness of houses where the cattle mingle with the people and where the human voices are often confused with the barking of dogs and the bleating of sheep!"<sup>1</sup>

But it is to be noted that on the whole nature poetry does not constitute an entirely independent theme in the Group's poetry. Their new aesthetic outlook has enhanced the process of incorporating natural descriptions into their love poetry. Hence, love and nature have often been linked together. In many instances natural scenery has served as a suitable background to their love poems, usually ennobling and idealizing the poet's passion. Further, the poet tends to bestow upon the various aspects of nature the ability to share his emotion of love, his feeling of anguish, or joy and ecstasy in the presence of his beloved.

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1. Mawt Dunyā, op. cit., p. 130.



Of the few poems which are solely concerned with the celebration of nature mention should be made of Falsafat al-waḥda, (The Philosophy of Loneliness), Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 12, p. 373; Ibn al-ṭabī'a (Son of Nature), Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 9, p. 396; Munājāt masjūn (A Prisoner's Communion), Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 10, p. 304; Tūtī fī al-Ṣabāḥ (Tutī at Morning), and Fī miḥrāb al-nīl (At the Nile's Altar), the collection Ishrāqa, pp. 36 and 102 respectively; and Al-Ṭabī'a taṣḥu (Nature Awakens), Dīwān Al-Tinay, p. 61.

In the first two poems there is an overwhelming passion for nature. The poet has given expression to a typically romantic notion in Falsafat al-waḥda.<sup>1</sup> Solitude has been prescribed as the best balsam for troubled and sensitive souls. This is why the poet has sought privacy and quietness in remote and undisturbed meadows where he can feel free and admire the beautiful aspects of nature. In her comeliness the burdened souls are bound to forget their sorrows and the wicked ways of society.

In Ibn al-ṭabī'a<sup>2</sup> the sentiment of love for nature is even more marked. Virgin nature is immensely fascinating to the poet. His attachment to her is so great that he passionately identifies himself with the phrase (ibn al-ṭabī'a), i.e. the son of nature. To him she is fascinating

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1. See Appendix, citation no. 18, p.299.

2. See Appendix, citation no. 19, p.300.

in every respect. But above all she is as tender-hearted as his own mother, and hence he urges her to embrace him, for he is a mere frightened child seeking the protection of its mother! Because of his fear of his own people and that maternal love and care which he is certain to get, the poet can no longer bear to stay away from nature. She has been the only source of his inspiration, and from the simple and unspoilt aspects of her beauty he has drawn his principles in life and the high ideals to which he aspires.

Of the numerous poems in which the themes of love and nature have been combined the following are worthy of note:

Al-ḥubb wa' l-jamāl (Love and Beauty), Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 14, pp. 629-630; Ṣūra (A Portrait), Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 13, p. 581; Dhikrāk (Your Memory), Ḥubb walīd (A New Love Affair), and Al-qadīm al-jadīd (The Old and New) in the collection Qiṣṣat Qalb, pp. 29-30, 48-50 and 98-100 respectively; Qubla wa- 'tirāf (A Kiss and Confession), Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 12, p. 368; 'Itāb (Reproach), Al-Fajr, vol. 2, issue 2, p. 94, and Najwā (Whispering) and Ilā ṣadīqī (To My Friend) in the collection Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, pp. 47-51 and 41-46 respectively.

It is to be noted that in this poetry the Group have reflected an entirely new attitude to nature. In traditional Arabic poetry, and in particular Andalusian poetry, the tendency is to merely describe nature or use its different aspects in similes which will help in making the poet's images more vivid and perceptible to the reader. The Al-

Fajr poets, not unlike their counterparts in the Arab world, are more inclined to reflect in their pastoral descriptions their personal feelings and the effect of such descriptions on them. Moreover, nature to them is a living being with whom they can communicate, a mother to whom they unburden the secrets of their hearts. Hence the ability of nature to share their troubles and soothe their miserable souls.

### C. Patriotism

In its different stages of development Sudanese literature has presented us with a sizable body of patriotic poetry. During the Turco-Egyptian rule and the Mahdist period many poets came forward and gave expression to their feelings of injustice and discontent. The Fajr poets continue this tradition, and the presence of nationalistic poems in their compositions is by no means new to the poetic heritage of the Sudan. But the situation in which they find themselves is different. As a result of the ~~advance~~ enlightenment of the education which they had received they were far more aware of the political and social conditions of their country than their predecessors. Many of them were men of high ideals and great hopes. They felt they had a unique responsibility towards their country. "The present status of the country, the era which it is approaching and the progress to which it aspires," writes the editor of Al-Fajr, "all need the effort of the enlightened class, and wholly rest on the shoulders of the cultured

men of the country."<sup>1</sup>

To their disappointment the political atmosphere was totally unfavourable to their aspirations. Not only was the government unprepared to allow them to share the responsibility of running their own country, but it even pursued highly repressive measures against those who expressed or propagated such wishes. It is interesting to note that the cessation of government surveillance of newspapers which the authorities announced officially in 1935 was a mere facade. In practice the censor continued to perform his duties as normal. The editor of Al-Fajr, in particular, remained subject to his frequent interrogations and warnings.<sup>2</sup>

It is against this background that we should read and assess the patriotic poems which were contributed by the members of Al-Fajr.

The poems are relatively limited in number. This is presumably attributable to the prevailing political conditions. It may also be added that as a result of the disastrous and dramatic happenings of the 1924 rising most of the poets were stunned and cowed by the aggressive attitude of the authorities. In the decade which followed only a few anonymous nationalistic poems found their way

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 8, p. 228.

2. This fact has been stressed in Mawt Dunyā, pp. 146-7.

to the public. They were mostly written in Sudanese colloquial Arabic.

As far as the Group are concerned some of their patriotic poems have apparently been inspired by events and places of historic interest. This brings to mind the inspiring effect of certain religious and social occasions on the neoclassicists in the Sudan, and how on such occasions they produced some of their finest compositions. In such poems the neoclassicists would return to the past and commemorate the glorious days of the Muslims. But with the Group there is no such religious invocation. The poem Ughniyat al-Shabāb, for instance, has been dedicated to those who used to frequent Kararī Mound<sup>2</sup> and revel upon the bodies of their dead fathers.

It is obvious that such places and events have been chosen to serve as a veil which will disguise the political or nationalistic nature of the poem.

Thematically, the poems of patriotism are two-fold. They are intended firstly to awaken and foster the national consciousness of the Sudanese people, and secondly, to convey the deep feelings of injustice and discontent among them to the rulers. It is to be stressed that there is no

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1. Qisṣat-Qalb, pp. 5-6.

2. Where in 1898 the famous battle of Kararī between the Mahdists and the conquest troops took place.

direct attempt to attack the authorities, and representations made to the rulers are expressed through allusions.

The poems Ughniyat al-Shabāb and 'Alā safḥ Sirghām may well be regarded as an early reminder to the younger generation of the Sudan that they should cast off their apathetic attitude and be aware of their country's appalling state and prepare themselves for the important role which they were expected to play in the enlightenment of their fellow countrymen. In the latter poem, there is an explicit reference to the state of repression which prevailed. It is also interesting to note that because of his fear of persecution the poet has chosen to express his feelings in the third person, through a young child whose father, along with others, has met his death in the battle which took place near Sirghām Mound. On behalf of this child the poet relates how the Sudanese fighters were killed by the gunfire of the invading Anglo-Egyptian troops. In his address to the mountain the child also gives expression to his feelings of sorrow and bitterness. There are many complaints which it wishes to make, but its fear of persecution and increased repression and mischief prevents it from doing so.<sup>1</sup>

Similar in tone are the poems Al-sharq jannat Allāh and Ta'ammalt<sup>2</sup> by Al-Tinay and Ṣāliḥ 'Abd al-Qādir respectively. In both the attack is somewhat disguised and

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1. See Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 14, pp. 630-1.

2. See Diwan Al-Tinay, pp. 25-6 and Al-Fajr, vol. 2, issue 2, p. 64.

generalized. The poets brood over the ill fate of the Muslim orient and how its people have pathetically given in to the Western rulers. But the implicit tone of indignation and discontent with the foreign rule in the Sudan can easily be discerned.

In Thawrat Shā'ir<sup>1</sup> Al-Tinay launches a bitter attack on his own people and their complacent attitude to the present state of affairs. They are neither jealous of their own rights nor enthusiastic about the national interests of the country. Hence the poet's indignation and abuse. It is important to stress the fact that the attack here has not been directed at the nation at large but the class of educated Sudanese. This fact has been underlined by the editor's constant endeavours to remind the rising generation of its national obligations towards the country.<sup>2</sup>

The Group were particularly concerned about the dangers of partisanship among the educated. On many occasions they stood out and opposed the formation of political parties and refused to ally themselves with any single grouping. They were convinced that partisanship would only result in disunity and animosity among the few educated people whose efforts ought to be mobilized for the welfare of the country. This view has been reflected in many instances in the

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1. Diwān Al-Tinay, pp. 27-8.

2. See, for example, Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 8, p. 228.

editorials of the journal.<sup>1</sup> It has also found expression in some of their poems. One such example is Waṭanī, a poem which, in view of its direct attack on party politics and the religious leaders who allied themselves with one or the other of the groupings which emerged, appeared anonymously in Al-Fajr<sup>2</sup> before its publication in the poet's collection later on.<sup>3</sup> In it, too, the poet has made direct reference to the political state and how the enemy, i.e. the British rulers, have ravaged the country and terrified and suppressed its people in collaboration with certain foreign and native elements.

Most outspoken in his nationalistic views is, perhaps, Ṣāliḥ 'Abd al-Qādir, a poet who was not only associated with the national rising of 1924 but also closely involved in its happenings and the persecutions which followed.

The poem Sabaqat awānī<sup>4</sup> reflects Ṣāliḥ's feelings of disappointment and grief over the misfortunes which have bedevilled his country. It sums up his whole career; the sad political experiences he has been through and the many sacrifices which he has made for his country. But

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1. See, for instance, Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 17, p. 194.
  2. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 20, p. 949.
  3. Diwān Al-Tinay, p. 29. See Appendix, citation no. 20, pp. 300-1.
  4. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 4, p. 118. See Appendix, citation no. 21, pp. 301-2.



alas! His own people are not only unsympathetic to the cause he has been fighting for but also they ignore the fact that he has made many personal sacrifices. He regards them as a dead nation, an intolerable fact with which he has to put up until he dies. Through his resentment he indirectly denounces the forces of imperialism and the foreign rulers who have dragged his country into such a situation.

In Ma'ltamasnā al-mustaḥīlā<sup>1</sup> (We have not asked for the impossible) Ṣāliḥ continues his attack on the Sudanese nation, or rather its elite, which, in his view, has been doomed to stagnation because of its contentment with the state of affairs. In an indignant mood he shouts at the top of his voice that a country which does not revolt against those who have done injustice to its people should disappear from the earth. But the country does not heed his advice, nor do his pleas goad its people into any positive action. Alas! It is ignorance which dominates over the destiny of his people, and hence they are bound to remain in their fetters for ever, living on gossip and concerning themselves with trivial matters in life. The poet believes that under such circumstances a good and peaceful life is only viable for those who are prepared to overlook the appalling situation in which the country is and behave as ignorant people do.

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 8, p. 247. See Appendix, citation no. 22, pp. 302-3.

Then in the last five lines the poet makes representation to the Governor General. He tells him that he is expected to be just and considerate to the people's demands for a better life and a brighter future.

In Alā Shu'ūr,<sup>1</sup> Ṣāliḥ launches yet another attack on his people. The nation has not learnt its lesson from the events of history, purely because of its people's ignorance. History will have no regard or room for such a nation which seems to have fallen into a slumber, hugging its own troubles and miseries. It looks like a child who has lost its parents and has been left all alone in life. The entire world has pushed ahead along the road of progress and civilization, while the Sudanese people are still lagging behind. From the advanced age in which humanity lives they have not reaped any benefit. Indeed, they seem completely cut off from this twentieth century in which we live.

D. Lamentation:

In many respects the article Junūn al-rithā',<sup>2</sup> seems to reflect the Group's main views on the question of lamentation in poetry. In his attempt to outline the features of modern Arabic elegiac poetry M.A. Al-Ṣiddīq

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 10, p. 303. See Appendix, citation no. 23, pp. 303-4.

2. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 19, pp. 709-12.

has helped us to gain an insight into the ideas of the Group and their outlook on one of the well-established themes of the Arabic tradition. A summary of this article is therefore of essential importance to the understanding of the Group's elegiac poetry.

The writer starts by making the remark that the body of elegiac poetry in Arabic is very large and that it is far greater than that of English poetry. The significance of this remark has been highlighted by the writer's stated conception of lamentation. Drawing upon his readings in English poetry, Al-Ṣiddīq conceives of it as the expression of deep sorrow over the death of a dear person, be it a noble and great man or an ordinary one. To the Western poets, with whom the writer agrees, the function of an elegy is two-fold: to praise the dead and admire their good qualities, and draw out useful lessons from the way they lived and the reality and inevitability of death. This concept has led the writer into the belief that lamentation is primarily a truthful representation of a genuine emotion which is aroused in the tender and sensitive soul of the poet and guided by his perceptive mind.

In the light of this the writer goes on to cite a few examples from English poetry including Wordsworth's elegy on Milton. From these examples the writer concludes that the English poets have conformed with his stated definition of elegiac poetry.

Having thus given a thoughtful account of the English elegy Al-Ṣiddīq turns his attention to the contemporary

Arabic elegy. He underlines its weaknesses and the great contrast which is to be found between the two traditions. To the writer the latter clearly reflects how unrealistic the attitude of the modern Arab poets is to the subject of lamentation. They are lacking in terms of simplicity and emotional depth. The Arab poet seems to go about the process of literary creation in a routine and business-like manner. Because of his lack of initial enthusiasm, he will have searched the diwāns of his predecessors and collected as many of their outworn ideas, descriptions and idioms as he possibly can before he composes his elegy. Such a lament, which in most cases runs into a hundred lines or so, is bound to be boring and unmoving. It is naive in outlook, since the only sign which distinguishes it from other elegies is the practice of including the titles of books or poems which the deceased may have written.

Such lengthy poems are usually devoid of any underlying emotion which the poets may have. Further, the ideas are scattered and not connected in any orderly manner, which fact leads to loss of identity and unity.

The writer maintains that the Arab poet's main concern is to emulate his predecessors, and hence the abundance of lies, exaggerations, superstitions and affectations in such poems. What is worse is the practice of accumulating outmoded and sometimes absurd expressions and images, such as the falling of the moon, the drying out of seas or the withering away of trees for grief over the dead person.

Al-Şiddīq believes that this criticism applies to the greater part of the body of Arabic elegiac poetry. In effect, the majority of these poems are flat in character and unidentifiable, so much so that if one were to remove the name of the person on whom a given elegy had been composed and replace it with any other name, the descriptions which had been attributed to the former would apply to and suit the latter just as well.

Contemporary elegiac poetry has also been criticized for its lack of wisdom and perception, a quality which the reader of such poetry will normally expect to find. There is no attempt by the poets to indulge in such wider philosophical issues as the reality of death as opposed to the transience of life, the questions of eternity, evil and good or glory. This has been attributed to the poet's naive concern with incidental and superficial matters, including positions, celebrations, receptions and other appearances which only relate to social status in life.

At the end of his article Al-Şiddīq asks with some passion whether any of the modern poets has attempted to elegize the simple and ordinary people. He believes that none of them has made such an attempt. Apparently this is because of the poets' mean and selfish nature, and their tendency to pursue their own interests. Hence their elegiac poetry is solely concerned with and addressed to the influential and famous. This has resulted in a great deal of flattery and affectation.

In the greater part of their elegiac poetry the Fajr

poets have shown that they are in harmony with the views which have been expressed by Al-Ṣiddīq on the theme of lamentation. Firstly, the elegies tend to reflect the poet's feelings of grief and his genuine emotional involvement. Secondly, there is a marked tendency among the Group to elegize only those whom they know or with whom they have some kind of personal acquaintance or relation. Maḥjūb, for instance, has lamented his own mother, Al-Tinay elegized his father and Al-Tijānī composed an elegy on the death of his beloved. This tendency has rendered the Group's elegiac poetry remarkably scanty. Thirdly, the poets are obviously inclined to reflect their feelings of sorrow and loss in a realistic manner which is removed from the exaggerations and absurdities of their predecessors, including the neoclassicists. Al-Tinay, for example, has reflected this feature in his above-mentioned elegy, where he asks whether his father's face will disappear for ever and his figure will never be seen around the house. Fourthly, many of the poets have reflected in their poems their pre-occupation with certain philosophical questions pertaining to life and death and the destiny of man.

Let us now have a close look at some examples of the Group's elegiac poetry.

Dam'a 'alā ṭifl<sup>1</sup> is a poem which is full of sorrow and anguish. By skilfully portraying the child's short life,

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1. Ishrāqa, pp. 70-2. See Appendix, citation no. 24, pp. 304-5.

his active and merry movements about the house and the pleasure he gave to his hopeful and ambitious parents, the poet has succeeded in arousing our deepest feelings of sympathy. In the first part of the poem, the poet attempts to describe the sorrows of the family. The tragedy seems to have moved every one of them, and there is an unceasing flow of tears and sighs for the untimely death of the child. The flame of torment is unextinguishable. The poet's own anguish which is only comparable to that of the mother is renewed by the ever present memory of the child.

Like a young prince the child used to walk proudly and cheerfully about the place. His eyes glittered like those of a crowned and commanding king, and who knows! He might have achieved great success and fame had he lived.

Then in a heart-breaking tone the poet describes the unhappy state in which the parents were left: Woe to the parents who entertained the thought of guarding you against death, and that sleepless mother. In the night they would anxiously tend you, for your ill health had exhausted their endurance. They pinned their hopes on you, for you were the only great hope they had. From birth you were destined by them to a great end. But alas! The cruel hands of doom have snatched the child away while he was still young, playing in his mother's lap and looking like a purified angel. With his disappearance the family's hopes have vanished leaving behind deep sorrow and anguish.

With tears the parents have passionately kissed the

tender but cold lips and bade farewell to their dead child. The flow of tears has only been checked by the suddenness of the blow and the feeling of bewilderment and loss. In an inexplicable state of grief members of the family have extended their hands to one another with disbelief and shock. The short life of the child was like a dream, and like a passing thought he disappeared.

In the poem 'Alā qabr ḥabīb<sup>1</sup>' the poet laments the death of the beloved one in a most moving manner. Apart from the poet's deep feelings of sadness, there is significantly a tendency to elegize the beauties of the beloved; the charm, tenderness and liveliness which have been buried with her. In view of the time in which the poet lived such a tendency could be said to be strange. But one will have to be reminded of the poet's compelling romantic nature and how he was pre-occupied with such meditative questions as the fate of man, and the will of the individual and whether he is free in the actions which he takes. At any rate it may be assumed here that Al-Tijānī has given expression to his own doubts and dissatisfaction with the order of things. By pointing out the charms of his beloved one he seems to exclaim: How strange and unconvincing it is that such beauty, innocent and purified beauty, which has brought immeasurable pleasure and happiness to many admirers - including himself - should

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1. Ishrāqa, p. 101. See Appendix, citation no. 25, pp.305-6.



have disappeared from our world and be contained in a hole in the ground.

In the stillness of the graveyard, and presumably in the night, Al-Tijānī's wailing voice meets our ears and reminds us of the tragedy of death and how he has lost his beloved one for ever. Beside her grave he stands and in an exclamatory tone broods over his misfortunes. Here wrapped up in grave clothes lies the beauty of life. The eyes of love are closed in their eternal sleep. Here are the arrows of fate rejoicing over destruction while the cup of death pours out its wine everywhere. How unerring these arrows are for they have hit their target and destroyed both drinkers and liquor. This is the cup of fate flooding the entire earth.

Then in the last part the poet addresses himself to his dead darling:

O! You are the anguish which fills the deserts, and the secret which crowds the graves! How strange it is that you have settled in this lonely spot, for you would not even feel secure in our palaces! How surprising it is that you have put up with these stones, for you were only used to the company of virgins and the flowers which they would put around your neck!

In Bint Al-Amīr<sup>1</sup> Maḥjūb laments the death of his mother in an equally passionate manner. It is interesting to note

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1. Qisṣat Qalb, pp. 113-6. See Appendix, citation no. 26, pp. 306-7.

how the poet has depicted his state of shock when he received the news of his mother's death. The news came quite unexpectedly, and was so shocking to the son that he felt that all the miseries and sadness of his future life would not weight on him as heavily as those which were caused by the untimely death of his dear mother. With her death he has lost his hopes and the only source of consolation and comfort he had. Yet how unaware he was that their last short meeting was destined to be followed by eternal separation. It is unavoidable Fate which has struck at him and left him permanently sad.

The poem reaches a climax when the wailing son reveals the extent of his tragedy by telling us that before passing away his mother had shown great anxiety about his future after her and the great state of despair in which he would be. Not only is he the only child of his parents but also he has already lost his father. Hence the son has been left all alone in this world with no mother, father, sister or brother to care for.

The poem Al-rubbān al-ghāriq<sup>1</sup> provides us with yet another example of emotional depth and sincerity. It is worth noting that this elegy was composed in memory of 'Arafāt Muḥammad 'Abd-Allāh, the leader of the Group. In it the poet has depicted the feelings of sadness among

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 2, pp. 53-4. See Appendix, citation no. 27, pp. 307-8.

the Sudanese people over the death of one of their prominent national leaders. The tragic death of 'Arafāt has been mourned by everyone, and the role which he played in the national movement of the country has been likened to that of a ship captain.

Despite his short life 'Arafāt was like a guiding star to his people. His final departure from the scene of life has been described as a divorce between him and life. Apparently, he was the one who decided to end the partnership because of his discontentment with what was going on. The political implication here is obvious and can hardly escape note.

To every individual citizen the disappearance of 'Arafāt has meant the loss of a great and long-cherished hope. The fire of torment has burnt everybody's heart and brought tears to every eye.

In section 4 the stillness of death has been used in a remarkable way. The poet sees this stillness as a reminder of 'Arafāt's calm, if determined nature which earned him respect from everybody. His calm character was more effective than any form of clamour.

In sections 5 and 6 the poet reflects not only the mood of sadness and distress among the people but also the pitiable conditions which prevailed in the country. Addressing himself to the deceased, the poet urges 'Arafāt to rise from his grave and see how wretched the nation has become. It is like a herd of animals lost in a desert. In the state of bewilderment which has resulted

from his sudden death, the nation has lost its sense of direction. It is like a small boat in cloudy and rough weather. Those who are in charge, i.e. the foreign rulers, have no concern for what has befallen it, and hence it is only bound for destruction and misfortunes.

In the last two lines of section 6 the word rubbān has intentionally been used in a rather general way in order to refer to those national leaders who have shouldered the responsibility after 'Arafāt. The political implication is obvious. The rubbān, or the leaders, have been prevented from safely bringing their boat ashore. The state of 'Arafāt's body and how it was tied up<sup>1</sup> in the grave is analogous with that of the Sudanese people and the fetters they were in.

### III. Form

Taken as a whole the poetic works of the Group present us with many distinctive features and changes in form, structurally as well as technically and stylistically. While pointing out these features and changes one should always bear in mind the classical form of the qaṣīda to which the neoclassicists in the Sudan faithfully adhered. The extent of the Group's innovative endeavours in this respect can best be appreciated and finally assessed through

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1. According to the Islamic way of preparing the body of the dead the hands and feet are bound up in a certain way.

our constant awareness of the contrast which exists between the production of the two generations.

(i) Structural Features:

Among the Fajr poets there is a remarkable tendency to use short and light metres. This is not surprising, since such metres seem to suit the lyrical and subjective nature of this poetry. The long metres, on the other hand, are more suited to the grand and serious themes of boasting, defamation or eulogy than they are to this simple, tender and self-expressive poetry. Furthermore, in many instances the poets have opted to use the shortened forms of these short metres, such as the majzū' and mashtūr, where in the former the last foot in each of the two hemistichs is dropped and in the latter a whole half of the line is left out. The two poems Ḍayā'<sup>1</sup> and Ḍaw' al-miṣbāḥ<sup>1</sup> serve to illustrate this feature.

The framework of the poem has also undergone a certain degree of change. The conventional practice of dividing the verse into two equal halves or laying them out with a space to separate them has lost its appeal for many of the poets. A number of poems including Al-bayn al-rahīb,<sup>2</sup> Khawf,<sup>2</sup>

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1. Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, p. 163 and Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 3, p. 79 respectively.

2. Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, pp. 149 and 156 respectively.

Al-wa'd<sup>1</sup> and Isti'tāf<sup>1</sup> have appeared without this typographic feature. In Ṭayf<sup>2</sup> the poet has also ignored this feature. Despite the fact that he has adopted the full length of the Rajaz metre by using the four recognized feet in every line, the poem has appeared with unspaced lines. Further, a few of the poets have been influenced by the form of the muwashshahāt. The poems by Ṣāliḥ 'Abd Al-Qādir, Mīmān and Ḥasan Rashīd Nūr are illustrative of this new attitude.

A striking novelty in this respect is the tendency to use a line of dots and include them in the verses. An example of this is the poem Yawm al-waḍā'<sup>3</sup>. But more daring, perhaps, is the attempt by M.A. 'Umar in his poem Al-firdaws<sup>4</sup> where only one word (hāhunā) appears in a whole line. The empty space has been filled up with dots.

More important though is the tendency to use more than one rhyme in the poem. Unlike the neoclassicists who recognized the poem with its uniform rhyme and metre as the qaṣīda par excellence, the Fajr poets have aspired to more freedom in rhyme and metre. This has been reflected

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 1, p. 14 and vol. 1, issue 24, p. 1152 respectively.
  2. Diwān Al-Tinay, p. 91.
  3. Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, pp. 100-1.
  4. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 7, p. 213.

in a considerable number of strophic poems. It is worth noting that by the 1930s strophic verse had firmly been established in modern Arabic poetry.

The rhyme scheme of such strophic poems ranges from the simple form of a,b,a,b/c,d,c,d/ or a,a,a,b/c,c,c,b/ to the more complex form of the muwashshaḥ. The length of strophes within the poem is likewise variable. A poem may consist of couplets, triplets, quatrains or quintets. But most favoured by the Group is the quatrain.

It is important to note here that as far as strophic length is concerned the poem does not always follow a regular pattern. The poem Al-Khurṭūm,<sup>1</sup> for instance, consists of six strophes each of which comprises the following number of lines: 5, 3, 5, 3, 5 and 5.

Let us consider some illustrative poems and describe their rhyme schemes. The signs used in this description are as follows:

The comma [^,^] indicates the end of a line.

The hyphen [^--^] denotes a bisected verse whose halves end with two different rhymes.

The oblique [^ / ^] signals the end of a strophe.

(1) Couplets:

The poem Rajā' (Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 23, p. 1089) has been composed in couplets. Its rhyme scheme is as follows:

a-b,a-b/c-d,c-d/e-f,e-f/ etc.

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1. See Ishrāqa, pp. 25-6.

In A'dhirīnī (Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 4, p. 159) the scheme is slightly different:

a-a, a-b/c-c, c-b/d-d, d-b/ etc.

But the poet of Qurbān jadīd (Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 11, p. 337) provides us with yet another different rhyme scheme. It runs as follows:

a-b, a-b/c-c, c-c/d-e, d-e/f-g, f-g/ etc.

(2) Triplets:

A few poems have appeared in this form. One example is the poem A'bisī lī (Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 6, p. 253) which is in groups of three rhyming lines. The lines are bisected but the rhyme is present only at the end:

a, a, a/b, b, b/c, c, c/ etc.

The rhyme scheme of Qalb (Ishrāqa, pp. 27-8) is:

a-b, a-b, a-b/c-d, c-d, c-d/e-f, e-f, e-f/ etc.

(3) Quatrains:

As has been mentioned before this is the favourite with the Group. Most of the poems by Khalaf are in the quatrain. One of them is Al-rawḍ al-kharib (Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 21, pp. 987-9), which is in bisected lines that do not rhyme internally. The scheme is simple:

a, a, a, a/b, b, b, b/c, c, c, c/ etc.

Jannat al-aḥlām (Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 24, pp. 1128-9) has a different pattern:



a-b, a-b, a-b, a-b/c-d, c-d, c-d, c-d/e-f, e-f, e-f, e-f/ etc.

Another poem which presents us with a simple rhyme scheme is Nazra 'ajlā (Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 1, p. 27).

The five-strophe poem with its bisected but unrhyming halves follow the pattern of:

a, a, a, a/b, b, b, b/c, c, c, c/ etc.

A remarkable feature of the poem Ḍaw' al-miṣbāh is the fact that each strophe ends with the line Ḍaw' u miṣbāhin bināfidhatik. Here is its rhyme scheme:

a, a, a, b/c, c, c, b/d, d, d, b/ etc.

In view of its rhyme scheme the poem Unshūdat al-jinn has been rendered remarkably musical. The scheme runs in the following order:

a-b, a-b, a-b, a-b/c-d, c-d, c-d, c-d/,

then a-e, a-e, a-e, a-e/a-f, a-f, a-f, a-f/

#### (4) Quintets:

The poem Ilā qalbī (Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 6, pp. 172-3) is in the quintet form. It has a simple rhyme scheme:

a, a, a, a, a/b, b, b, b, b/c, c, c, c, c/ etc.

But Yā jamīl (Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, p. 88) has a remarkably different form. It is:

a, a, b, b, c/d, d, e, e, c/f, f, g, g, c/

It is also interesting to note that the number of feet which the poet has used is variable. The first two lines of each strophe have four feet each, the next two have three each,

while the last line consists of one foot only.

In Lawḥat al-Shā'ir (Ishrāqa, p. 105) the poet presents us with yet another interesting rhyme scheme:

a-a, b-b, b-b, b-a, b-a/c-a, c-c, c-c, c-a, c-a/d-a, d-d, d-d, d-a, d-a/ etc.

As can be seen the internal rhyme has been coupled with another external one.

This arrangement brings to mind the Andalusian muwashshahāt and the freer form in which they appeared. Reminiscent of them too are the following poems: Law'a (Qiṣṣat Qalb, pp. 117-20), Tarīq al-ḥayāt (Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 12, pp. 527-9), Najwā (Al-Fajr, vol. 2, issue 4, pp. 160-1) and Yā layāl fī Ṣibānā (Al-Fajr, vol. 2, issue 4, pp. 163-4).

The poem Ilayk<sup>1</sup> represents a climax in Mīmān's attempts at freeing his poetry from the shackles of form and metre. Prior to this poem he contributed Ḍaw' al-miṣbāḥ<sup>2</sup> and Aghfirī<sup>2</sup> where in the former the line ḍaw' u miṣbāḥin bināfidhatik has been retained at the end of five strophes in a six-strophe poem. In the latter he has used a one-foot part, or line, as the basis of his rhyme scheme. Ilayk is remarkable in its layout. Using the masḥūr of the Ramal metre the poet has chosen to write the first

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 5, p. 155. Cf. Appendix, citation no. 28, pp. 308-9.

2. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 3, p. 79; and vol. 3, issue 4, p. 120 respectively.

two feet (fā'ilātun, fā'ilātun) in one line, with the third one appearing separately in the following line. This third foot rhymes with yet another separately laid out part. The poem does not follow any set pattern, either in terms of the number of lines which each strophe comprises or in rhyme. Further, the occasional addition of an extra foot to the two-foot hemistich means that the number of feet has been increased to four. Apparently, the poet has by intention chosen not to observe the form of the masḥṭūr of Ramal which consists of three feet and in which he has started his poem.

To help clarify this point here is the rhyme scheme of each of the four strophes of which the poem consists: The letter above the line denotes a one-foot part appearing in a separate line.

a, a, b, b, b, <sup>a</sup>  
c, <sup>d</sup>, c, <sup>d</sup>, c, <sup>d</sup>, e  
f, f, <sup>g</sup>, e  
h, h, <sup>i</sup>, j, j, <sup>i</sup>, k, k, <sup>i</sup>, e.

#### Experimentation with Free Verse:

The poem Ādam al-Ṣaghīr<sup>1</sup> (Young Adam) which appeared in Al-Fajr on the first of February, 1935, is a landmark not only in the literary history of the Sudan but also in

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 16, pp. 718-20.

the development of modern Arabic poetry in general. In it Maḥjūb has made a complete break with the canons of Arabic poetry. It stands out among the few pioneering experiments which the evolution of free verse in Arabic literature had witnessed at the time.

It is perhaps worthwhile at this point to review developments in the literary arena in the Arab world, before embarking upon a detailed study of the poem in question. By 1935 the discussion about rhyme in Arabic poetry and the question of its importance and limitations had got well under way. Al-Zahāwī, for instance, discussed the issue in the preface of his dīwān which appeared in 1924. Nu'ayma had also concerned himself with it in Al-Ghirbāl in 1923. Further, the current literary magazines such as Al-Siyāsa al-Uṣbū'iyya, Al-Balāgh, Al-Hilāl and Al-Risāla were also drawn into discussing this highly controversial issue.

The discussion was carried several steps further by Abū Shādī in Apollo (1932-4) and the magazine Adabī (1936-7). In his various anthologies and articles Abū Shādī experimented with Shi'r mursal and defended it against the attacks of its opponents. To this poet the first serious attempt in modern Arabic poetry to write free verse based upon metric not prose rhythm has been attributed.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Moreh, Modern Arabic Poetry, Leiden, 1976, p. 161.

The most recent experimentations with Shi'r mursal or Shi'r hurr which might have had direct bearing on Maḥjūb's poem are those by Abū Shādī<sup>1</sup> and Khalīl Shaybūb,<sup>1</sup> who was also an active member of the Apollo group. In Mukhtārāt waḥy al-ʿām (Cairo, 1928) Abū Shādī tried once again a combination of metres in the poem Munāẓara wa-ḥanān. In his introductory note on it he referred to it as an example of blank verse and used the terms al-shi'r al-ḥurr and al-shi'r al-mursal synonymously. Rhyme is absent in this poem and the number of feet varies from one line to another. Apparently, the poet has been guided by the length of his sentences rather than by a uniform number of rhythms or feet. This in turn has led to the use of enjambment (tadmīn), since the poet has allowed his sentences to overflow from one line to another in order to complete the meaning. A considerable number of lines end with a sukūn to emphasize the unity of the sentence and its independence. Further, there is no deliberate use of rhyme.

Shaybūb published his poem Al-Shirāʿ in Apollo in 1932<sup>2</sup>. The strophes into which the poem has been divided have no regular length. There is also an irregular change in metre and rhyme. Within the strophe there is no uniform

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1. 1892-1955 and 1891-1951 respectively.

2. Apollo, vol. 1, issue no. 3, pp. 227-231.

length of line; presumably the number of feet is determined by the length of the sentence.

As far as the poem Ādam al-ṣaghīr is concerned there are certain preliminary observations which may be made. Firstly, and as the title suggests, it is concerned with the theme of childhood. It is particularly important to note the Group's adoration of children and how many members of the Group became fascinated by the world of childhood and regarded it as a symbol of purity, cheerfulness and innocence. Al-Tijānī, for example, has composed many poems which reflect this attitude. Maḥjūb must have been induced by the freedom which is usually associated with this phase of life to compose his poem and try his hand at free verse. After all the subject matter is not of a serious nature, and the world of childhood is conceived as an ideal world which is free from restraint and the feeling of embarrassment. Children are particularly noted for their innocent and sometimes ingenious play. Maḥjūb might have looked on his daring poetic experiment in the same way.

Secondly, the poem appeared in a special issue of Al-Fajr. It may be recalled that Maḥjūb was one of the few members in the Group who were closely involved in editing the periodical. Bearing this fact in mind, it would not be unnatural for him to hope to live up to the occasion and surprise his readers with a poem which would reflect the Group's modernistic attitude to literature and their innovative abilities. Ādam al-ṣaghīr, he must have thought, was a poem which was remarkable not only in its subject

matter but also in its total departure from the set rules of poetry.

Thirdly, the poem was not included in Maḥjūb's first anthology which was published later on. This fact may well serve to underline the importance of the experiment and the seriousness with which the poet and his colleagues regarded it at the time. By the time of publishing his anthology - that is presumably sometime between the early 40s and the early 50s - Maḥjūb had become one of the Sudan's most accomplished poets and politicians. At that time also the field of literature looked almost deserted since all the educated had been drawn into the political struggle for independence. The efforts of all the educated class, including the traditionalists and modernists, were united and directed towards the achievement of that goal. Under the circumstances, and in view of his new role as a prominent politician, Maḥjūb must have felt that the inclusion of such a literarily controversial poem might distract attention from the serious and more important issue of independence. Furthermore, at this time traditional poetry in the Sudan had begun to assume its previous social role. The political circumstances made the qaṣīda the most effective means of reaching and mobilising the emotional reactions of the people and arousing their national aspirations. The appearance of Maḥjūb's poem during that particular period might well have discredited him as an accomplished poet and rhetorician.

As for the poem itself,<sup>1</sup> a detailed study of it reveals the following facts:

- (i) The poem consists of ten strophes each of which comprises five lines.
- (ii) The poet has made use of a combination of metres. The Ramal is the most frequently used.
- (iii) There is a complete absence of rhyme.
- (iv) Most of the lines end with a sukūn, which fact stresses the entity of the sentence and the overriding importance of meaning with regard to the line.
- (v) Consequently, the poet has made frequent use of enjambment (taḍmīn), which in turn has allowed the natural flow of his thoughts and ideas. The last strophe clearly illustrates this fact.
- (vi) The number of feet varies from one line to another. An illustration is to be found in the first strophe, where the number of feet in the five lines is three, four, three, two and three respectively.

Maḥjūb's poem remained as the solitary experiment in free verse in the Sudan until in 1952 Al-Tinay, an intimate friend with the poet, published his poem Ḥubb wa-salām.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See Appendix, citation no. 29, pp. 309-12.

2. The poem appeared in Dīwān Al-Tinay, which comprises the poet's early collection Al-Ṣadā al-Awwal and Al-Sarā'ir. See Dīwan Al-Tinay, pp. 135-7.



It may be concluded that with the Fajr group the poem became relatively shorter. This is mainly attributed to the Group's direct and uncereemonious approach to the subject matter of their poems. While the neoclassicists attached great importance to the preludes of their qaṣīdas, the younger poets have shown no inclination to use this conventional technique. One should also be reminded of the highly subjective nature of the Group's poetry, and the fact that in most of their compositions the poets were urged by their own feelings and private experiences in life.

Many short poems and segments (maqṭū'āt) consisting of two to five lines have found their way to the Group's compositions. These are usually poems of an ephemeral nature and as such they were intended to express a single thought which crossed the poet's mind, the sudden eruption of an emotion or the recollection of a past experience. Here are the titles of some such poems:

Jafā' al-ḥabīb, Mawqif and Ṣafḥat al-ballūr which appeared in Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 1, p. 27; issue 4, p. 163 and issue 6, p. 253 respectively.

'Irḍuk and Al-aṭlāl in Dīwān Al-Tinay, p. 18.

Ṣabwa and Taḥiyya in Qisṣat Qalb, pp. 74 and 76.

Al-Sa'āda, Wadā' and Ilḥāḥ in Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, pp. 140, 150 and 153.

Among the poetic collections of the Group Al-Shabāb al-Awwal by Muḥmūd Ḥamdī may be singled out for the considerable number of short poems which it contains.

(ii) Technical and Stylistic Features:

(a) The Image of the Singing Bird:

There is a tendency among the poets to ~~closely~~ associate themselves <sup>closely</sup> with the birds which sing freely in the meadows. This seems to suit their romantic nature and their constant yearning for beauty, freedom and peace of mind. Whether the bird is in its joyous and free mood or in a state of sorrowfulness it tends to represent their sensitive souls and their discontentment with the world in which they found themselves. Further, beautiful and docile as it is the bird must have provided them with the good and trustworthy companion whom they so desperately needed and made up for their loss of confidence in society.

Naturally, the place for joyous and free singing is the garden, and hence the close association between the two in the Group's poetry. Birds and lovers alike could best enjoy themselves away from the clamour of life, the greedy nature of ordinary people and the watchful eye of society.

The poems Al-bulbul al-sajīn (vol. 1, issue 6, pp. 250-1), Ma'dhirat al-sāhī (vol. 1, issue 17, pp. 802-4), Al-rawḍ al-kharīb (vol. 1, issue 21, pp. 997-9), Jannat al-aḥlām (vol. 1, issue 24, pp. 1128-9) and Ilā qalbī (vol. 3, issue 6, pp. 172-3) which have all appeared in Al-Fajr present us with a few of the numerous examples in which the image of the bird and the garden has been portrayed.

It is interesting to note here that in the poem

Al-rawḍ al-kharib the poet has so closely identified himself with the song-bird that it is hardly possible to distinguish one from the other.

(b) Religiousness:

The poets of Al-Fajr have adopted a highly religious language in their love poetry. A whole range of religious idioms and expressions have been borrowed in order to express their saintly adoration of beauty and total devotion to it. Amidst the atmosphere of monachism which prevails in this poetry the image of the monk-lover has naturally emerged. The poets saw themselves as monks in the kingdom of beauty and love. Within the boundaries of this monastery they felt free from earthly impurities and sins and became ecstatically overwhelmed by love and devotion to beauty, so much so that they regarded themselves as worshippers. This has been reflected in many poems including Mawqif, 'Aynāk and Najwā wa-ṣalāh which have appeared in Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 4, p. 163, vol. 3, issue 1, p. 15 and issue 6, p. 188 respectively. Evidence of this notion can also be found in the poem Khafqat qalb part of which appears in the Appendix.<sup>1</sup> In it the poet has described himself as rāhib al-ḥusn, i.e. the monk of beauty.

Under the influence of this romantic notion which is

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1. Citation no. 9, p. 291.

not dissimilar to that of the Ṣūfīs, the poets, or monk-lovers, made many offerings at the altar of beauty and love. And it is not unnatural that it was the bleeding or wounded heart or the anguished soul which they sacrificed. This kind of offering was the greatest sacrifice they could make in order to express their attachment and devotion to love and beauty. Hence the frequent use of the word qurbān.

In his poem Al-qurbān al-jarīh (Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 15, p. 677) the poet has repeated the phrase qurbān al-hawā, i.e. love-offering, three times. Similarly Mīmān has given the title Al-qurbān to one of his poems, (Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 15, p. 674), and M.A. 'Umar has published a poem under the title Qurbān jadīd (Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 11, p. 377).

(c) Tenderness:

Tenderness and transparency of expression is another significant feature of the Group's poetry. This has been enhanced by the poets' own circumstances, social and political as well as personal. The fact that they found themselves in a highly reserved and sometimes repressive society, and their failure to realize their ambitions in love and politics led them to the conclusion that they lived in a harsh and unjust world. What is more, many of them realized that they were unable to change the order of things, for they were left powerless in the face of the deeply rooted beliefs and customs of their society

and the mighty power of their rulers. They discovered that even the woman whom they loved and frequently idealized was not always trustworthy. Hence, their poetry, particularly their love poems, has become marked by a tone of complaint and despondency. Their love poems have turned into lyrical songs in which they brood over their ill fortunes and depict their unhappy experiences in a moving and tender manner.

The poems Waqfa 'alā dār<sup>1</sup>, Al-zawra,<sup>1</sup> Dunyāya,<sup>1</sup> Qubla,<sup>1</sup> Ḥubb walīd<sup>2</sup> and 'Īd al-ḥubb<sup>2</sup> present us with a few of the many examples which clearly reflect the tender quality of this poetry.

Tender expressions such as fawāshawqāh (Oh! How great is my yearning) and wā'adhābī (What a torment I am in) have found their way to this poetry.<sup>3</sup> Even in the titles of some of their poems the Group have given a clear indication of their tender nature and personal preoccupations. The poems Zafra (A Sigh), Anīn (Moaning), Law'at al-gharīb (The Stranger's Anguish), A'dhirīnī (Pardon Me [my beloved one]), Ilā qalbī (To My Heart), Ḍama' (Thirst) and Khafqat qalb (A Heart Beat) attest to this fact.

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1. Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, pp. 33-7, 69-71, 145-6 and 160-1 respectively.

2. Qiṣṣat Qalb, pp. 48-50 and 55-7 respectively.

3. E.g. the poems Al-ḥākī (Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, pp. 56-9) and Al-Fajr, vol. 2, issue 2, p. 65.

The quality of tenderness has been achieved mainly through the poets' power of personification and ability to embody states of feelings and abstractions. Thus the images created by the poet tend to imply and suggest - rather than state - his ideas to the reader. This is what has been referred to by one member of the Group as al-ta'bīr bi'l ṣuwar wa-lays bi'l jumal, i.e. expression through images and pictures and not through statement of facts.<sup>1</sup>

The conventional way of using similes in which the component parts would faithfully correspond to one another in terms of resemblance has fallen out of favour with the Group. Instead they have opted to embody and personify their ideas and feelings and in many instances, create complex pictures which will not only appeal to the modern reader but also underline one of the essentials of poetry, that is the element of imagination.

In the poem Tabassam<sup>2</sup> the poet does not attempt to give us a kind of photographic description of the smile of his beloved one. Instead he chooses to tell us about the effect of such a smile: It is so sweet that it makes the infatuated lover forget his anxieties and overcome the feeling of boredom. This suggestive and indirect method

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1. Dīwān Al-Tinay, p. 11.

2. Dīwān Al-Tinay, pp. 55-6

of description seems to have a great appeal for the reader since it does not limit the freedom of his imagination by providing him with ready-made pictures or similes but leaves him free to wonder as to the fascination of the smile and the appearance of the beloved.

In the poem Al-tawḥīd<sup>1</sup> we have been presented with a complex picture of images through which the poet attempts to describe his continuous adventures in the world of love and beauty, and how they have ended in discontentment and disillusionment. Another example is to be found in the first four lines of Al-yaqza where the dark night has been described through a series of overlapping images.<sup>2</sup> Among the Group Al-Tijānī has shown a strong tendency to use figurative descriptions, so much so that in some of his poems he gets carried away by his overwhelming desire for similes and mental pictures.

Al-Tinay is also notable for his tendency and remarkable ability to personify things and embody states of feelings. In one of his poems he describes his attachment to beauty and, perhaps, the unknown, in terms of dancing with the light which has been emitted by the eyes of the stars.<sup>3</sup> In Al-shu'ūr al-mubham<sup>4</sup> the intervening

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1. Diwan Al-Tinay, pp. 59-60.

2. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 6, p. 252.

3. Cf. the poem Intiṣār al-Shabāb (line no. 5),  
Diwān Al-Tinay, pp. 23-4.

4. (lines 7 and 9 of the poem) Ibid., pp. 35-6.

period of separation which extends between the last time the lovers met and their future meeting has been described in geographical terms. It is a wilderness which is full of the lover's feeling of loss and doubt. During this period the lover is haunted by ghosts and he falls prey to successive periods of insanity and sobriety. In this way, and through the poet's power of personification insanity and sobriety have been visualized. They appear like two monsters kicking the helpless lover between them. By this means the poet has helped us realize the unfortunate situation in which the lover has found himself, and hence aroused our deep sympathy for him. This has been achieved, and with a great degree of success by the technique of personification.

Another example is to be found in the poem Min al-māḍī al-qarīb,<sup>1</sup> where the poet's yearning seems to travel long distances in pursuit of the beloved. But when the two meet again, the lover becomes so overwhelmed by joy that eternity seems touchable to him.

(d) Lyricism and Simplicity:

These are two other features which have contributed to making the Group's poetry tender and appealing. As a result of their readings in modern Arabic and foreign literature, particularly the English romantic poets, the

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 5, pp. 153-4, lines 14 and 22.



Group became convinced that the best way of expressing themselves and conveying their innermost feelings to the reader was through the use of simple diction and the adoption of a direct approach to the subject matter of their poems. This conviction has found its way to many of the Group's critical writings. One such example is the two-part essay which M.A. Al-Şiddīq wrote on Al-Māzinī, and in which the latter was criticized for the inclusion of archaic words and outmoded expressions in his poetry.

But the tendency to use simple and direct language has been manifested most prominently in the Group's poetry. A good example is the two poetic collections Al-Shabāb al-Awwal and Diwān Al-Tinay where the reader does not encounter any difficult words or obscure expressions. Even in the themes of their poems the poets have shown their interest in the simple and ordinary aspects of life. Al-Tijānī, for example, has depicted his childhood in the poem Al-khalwa and his boyhood in Al-ma'had al-'ilmī. Al-Tinay has celebrated his wedding anniversary in October 29 and recalled the destruction which was caused by the Second World War - in which he took part - in Raḥā al-ḥarb. Similarly, Ḥamdī has described the feelings of anxiety and frustration experienced by the lover while he awaits the appearance of his beloved one at the appointed time in the poem Sā'at intizār. In 'Īd mīlād and Adam al-ṣaghīr Maḥjūb celebrates the innocence of childhood and the pleasure it gives to adults.

Simplicity of language and lyricism of style are attributable to the poets' tendency to use short metres and employ various rhymes in the poem. It may also be added that many of the poets had a natural liking for singing. Al-Tinay for example, wrote an article on the art of singing and composed a few poems which, in view of their lyrical and simple nature, were rendered highly singable. Indeed, the poets paid special care to the musical aspect of their poems. Before publishing a poem or circulating it among his friends the poet would have first chanted it to himself then recited it to one of his intimate friends so that its musical quality and suitability for publication might be ascertained.<sup>1</sup>

Here are some of the poems which are notable for their highly lyrical style and simple language. Those which have appeared in Al-Fajr include:

A'dhirīnī (vol. 1, issue 4, p. 159).

Rajā' (vol. 1, issue 23, p. 1089).

Yā layāl fī ṣibāna (vol. 2, issue 4, pp. 163-4).

Aghfirī (vol. 3, issue 4, p. 120).

Ilayk (vol. 3, issue 5, p. 155).

Badr al-hawā (vol. 3, issue 6, p. 189).

Dunyā qalbī (vol. 3, issue 8, pp. 244-5).

Qurbān jadīd (vol. 3, issue 11, p. 337).

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1. This fact has been stressed by Maḥjūb. See the preface to Diwān Al-Tinay, p. 13.

Those which have been published in Diwān Al-Tinay are: Nidā' al-jīl, Ẓama', Tabassam, Ighrā', Ṭayf and Fīnūs, pp. 30, 41, 55, 84, 91 and 94 respectively.

Those included in Al-Shabāb al-Awwal are: Laylat ams, Udhkurīnī, Yā jamīl, Firāq jadīd and Shakk, pp. 82-3, 84, 88, 126-7, and 158 respectively.

The collection Qiṣṣat Qalb includes: Ughniyat al-shabāb, Najwā gharīb, Bu'd wa-qurb, Fi'l-ṭarīq, 'Īd al-hubb and 'Indamā ta'tī al-safīna, pp. 5-6, 33-4, 39-40, 53-4, 55-6 and 95-7 respectively.

The anthology Ishrāqa includes: Al-khurṭūm, Qalb, Zuha 'l-ḥusn, Unshūdat al-jinn, Al-nā'im al-mashūr and Lawḥat al-shā'ir, pp. 25-6, 27-8, 48, 55, 79 and 105 respectively.

(e) Narration:

This is another important technical device which the poets have made use of in a considerable number of their poems. The tendency here is to narrate and dramatize the event or experience rather than to tell bare facts in a straight forward manner. It may be assumed that through the ingenious technique of narration the poets hoped to fascinate the modern reader and arouse his interest.

The technique is by no means new to the Arabic tradition, for a number of Arab poets, including 'Umar Ibn Abī Rabī'a, had already tried it. But in the Sudan it was not as widely known as it was in the rest of the Arab world. Those few neoclassicists who resorted to it only made use of its

simple and direct form. This is mainly because of the predominantly didactic nature of their poetry.

The different forms of narration which the Group have adopted are: simple narration, conversational narration and soliloquy.

In the first the poet takes up the role of a storyteller. Here conversational or direct speech is missing, since the practice is to tell or report a past incident or event in the third person. Hence the past tense is commonly in use. The poem Al-qamar al-majnūn<sup>1</sup> presents us with a good example. Apparently, the poem's didactic theme has enhanced the use of this form. Other examples are to be found in the poems Raḥā al-ḥarb<sup>2</sup> and Al-maqbara al-majhūla,<sup>3</sup>

Conversational narration is the most popular form with the Group. In it the poet would ingeniously create a situation whereby a conversation could be entered into. Normally two characters would be engaged in the dialogue, with the poet playing one part and the beloved, or the song-bird, playing the other. Of his colleagues the poet Khalaf has been noted for his tendency to use this type of narration. His poems Gharām al-shuyūkh<sup>4</sup> and Al-rawḍ al-kharib<sup>4</sup> serve as a good illustration. Other examples

1. Ishrāqa, pp. 80-2.

2. Diwan Al-Tinay, pp. 105-6.

3. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 15, pp. 672-3.

4. Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 8, pp. 344-5 and issue 21, pp. 987-9.

include Al-hāribā, Last ansāk and Falsafat al-qubal which appeared in Qisṣat Qalb, pp. 42-3, 51-2 and 60-2 respectively.

Soliloquy narration poems are few in number. In such poems the poet speaks to himself. The means of expressing his thoughts is usually the heart or his inmost being, (fu'ād). Examples of this type are to be found in Al-kanz al-ḡā'i', Shakk and Baynī wa-bayn nafsī which have all appeared in Al-Fajr, vol. 1, issue 7, pp. 299-301; issue 22, p. 1034; and issue 24, p. 1151 respectively.

It may be observed that the tendency to narrate and dramatize has resulted in a greater sense of unity in the poem. Further, in this kind of poetry there is a greater degree of freedom and flexibility. In effect the poets have made use of enjambment where the rhymes do not serve as full stops, and the sense is allowed to overflow from one verse into the next.

(f) Repetitiveness

This is another distinctive stylistic feature of the Group's poetry. In many of their compositions the poets tend to choose a single word or phrase and repeat it a number of times. Most common is the instance of repeating a word at the beginning of many successive lines. In the poem Awadā'a<sup>1</sup> which consists of sixteen lines the word

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1. Appendix, citation no. 3, pp. 284-5.

awadā'ā has been used twelve times, and in the six-line poem Ilā ṣadīqī<sup>1</sup> five lines start with the word arsaltuhā. Another example is to be found in the poem 'Indamā ta' tī al-safīna<sup>2</sup> where the poet has retained the word al-safīna at the end of all twelve couplets of which the poem consists.

The repetition of words in succession and within the line is rather rare. The poet Al-Tinay has been noted for this kind of usage. This has been reflected in the poems Arrijī, Tabassam and Hubb wa-ghufrān.<sup>3</sup>

This technique has helped in emphasizing the meaning and sustaining the interest of the reader of this poetry.

Another instance of repetitiveness is the use of what may be called theme-line or lines. Here a whole line is repeated in order to echo and highlight the theme of the poem. In his six-strophe poem which is entitled Ḍaw' al-miṣbāḥ<sup>4</sup> the poet Mīmān has retained the line Ḍaw' u miṣbāḥin bināfidhatik at the end of each strophe. Similarly, the independent line Āhī yā badra'l-hawā mā ajmalak has

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1. Al-Shabāb al-Awwal, p. 41.

2. Qiṣṣat Qalb, pp. 95-7.

3. Diwān Al-Tinay, pp. 52-3, 55-6 and 57 respectively.

4. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 3, p. 79.

been kept throughout the poem Badr al-hawā.<sup>1</sup> Other examples are to be found in Ilā qalbi,<sup>2</sup> Najwā wa-ṣalāh<sup>2</sup> and Law'a.<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes a whole section of a poem is repeated. An illustration of this is to be found in Al-Khurṭum<sup>4</sup> and A'bis.<sup>5</sup>

It may be concluded that as a stylistic device repetitiveness has served to emphasise the sense of unity in the poem.

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1. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 6, p. 189.
  2. Al-Fajr, vol. 3, issue 6, pp. 172-3 and 188 respectively.
  3. Quiṣṣat Qalb, pp. 117-20.
  4. Ishrāqa, pp. 25-6.
  5. Diwān Al-Tinay, p. 16.

## SUMMARY AND EPILOGUE

### SUMMARY

The Sudanese people possess a substantial and rich store of oral literature. This literature is composed in Sudanese Arabic which is notable for its relative purity.

The popularity of oral literature among the people, the majority of whom are illiterate, is mainly attributable to the fact that the art form is composed in the day-to-day language.

The main branches of oral literature are: the popular tale, the colloquial verse and the proverbs. While the first is considered to be the basic form, the second is by far the most popular form of oral literature. In it are to be found some of the tendencies and characteristics of the classical qaṣīda.

The modern song, which is an evolution from the dubayt, is characterized by the refinement of its language and the sophistication of its themes. These, along with modern music have contributed to its popularity in the Sudan.

Classical poetry in the Sudan took its definitive shape during the Turco-Egyptian rule. Its course of development is in sharp contrast with that of the classical heritage.

The exponents of this poetry are the 'Ulamā', whose themes are limited to panegyrics and praises of the Prophet.

The greatest part of this poetry is artificial and



devoid of emotional involvement, the two of which are considered to be the characteristic features of contemporary Arabic poetry in the 19th century.

In the Mahdist era classical poetry continued to pursue the same path with slight variations. New themes, including songs of courage and battle description have emerged.

On the whole poetry has made a long step towards progress. It has achieved a few of the essentials of modern poetry and become more vital and exciting.

With the advent of the Condominium important changes and adaptations in Sudanese life have taken place. The development of classical poetry has been carried many steps further at the hands of the first generation of graduates of Gordon College. By the 1920s the traditional poets of the Sudan had firmly established themselves as oracles of their community. Through their tendency towards an emotional expression of patriotic, social and didactic themes, they reached a wider public and reigned supreme till the mid 30s.

The cultural background of the Group derives from two main sources; domestic and foreign. By domestic is meant the Group's readings in Arabic in general and the Egyptian writings in the 1920s and 30s in particular. The foreign source is indicated by the presence of facets of Western culture, notably English literature.

But the impact of Egyptian literature has been found to be most profound and important in shaping and directing the movement of Al-Fajr. Many factors have contributed to

this situation.

During the second and third decades of this century Egypt's periodicals and books poured into the Sudan, where they were read with great enthusiasm. The Group, who were naturally disposed to literature, took a keen interest in the literary writings of these periodicals and books, and followed very closely every debate or issue which was raised in them.

In those days, in many respects, Egypt seemed to have bridged the cultural gap between the West and the Sudan.

The readings of the Group in English literature came as a second stage in their literary development. The fact that most members of Al-Fajr graduated from the Gordon College enhanced the spreading of the English language and literature.

Certain Arab and English writers and poets have exerted their influence on the Group.

It has been established that the earliest contacts between the members of Al-Fajr took place in the early 20s at the College, where a few members are believed to have formed the nucleus of the movement. After the graduation of many of them, the Group found itself at odds with the older generation and the authorities. This enhanced their subjective outlook on life and literature and encouraged them to meet in private. The private gatherings of the Group led to their intellectual integration and ultimately gave birth to their literary movement.

Al-Fajr was launched on June 2, 1934, as a half-monthly magazine. Its appearance marks the beginning of the first conscious literary movement in the Sudan. In its early days the magazine appeared in a predominantly literary guise, but soon there was a shift of emphasis.

The collection of Al-Fajr has been reproduced in three volumes, each of which comprises a certain number of issues. But research has shown that some issues are missing from the collection.

The launching of the magazine was met with enthusiasm at home and abroad. Its editors adopted a moderate and an independent line. They endeavoured to set an example of good writing, and succeeded in their call for a kind of specialized writing.

The important literary issues raised in the periodical include the propagation of Western culture, especially English literature, the call for the introduction of new genres into Arabic literature and the promotion of a Sudanese national literature.

Most important are the Group's views on literary criticism and poetry. The members of Al-Fajr attached great importance to criticism and believed that a healthy literary movement could only take form in the light of sound modern critical ideas. Their views are in agreement with their conception of poetry.

One of the important issues debated in Al-Fajr is the question of creating a Sudanese national literature. In seeking to foster national consciousness among the people,

the editors of Al-Fajr have clearly underlined the inseparable relationship between literature and nationalism.

A leading member of the Group has provided us with the first serious attempt to expound and debate the call for a Sudanese national literature and given expression to the political motives connected with it.

Underlying the Group's literary views are the three romantic concepts of the poet as visionary and prophet, organic unity and obscurity in poetry. The Group's preoccupation with these concepts has been reflected in the writings of Al-Fajr.

The concept of the poet-prophet has evolved out of a cross-cultural process. Poetry has been considered as a magical world exclusively known to the poets, the saviours of the people. The importance of inspiration and vision in poetry greatly outweighs that of craft and deliberation.

The question of organic unity has been considered from psychological and aesthetic angles. The high ideals of truth, beauty and goodness have also been integrated in the Group's aesthetic views in relation to unity in literature.

The nature of the soul, which is the source of poetry, is complex and inexplicable, and hence the presence of ambiguity in poetry. In most cases the attraction of poetry lies in the vagueness of its meanings and the mystifying appeal of its tunes.

Individual differences in taste and temperament are

also responsible for ambiguity.

Despite the fact that the Group have not succeeded in laying down any specific norms according to which a literary work may be judged, members of Al-Fajr are united in their general conception of poetry and literature. They have reflected a coherent critical outlook in their criticism. The Group are mainly opposed to the old criteria of literary criticism which were predominantly concerned with textual criticism and language and mannerism of style.

The writings of M.'A. Al-Şiddīq and M.A. Maḥjūb are representative of the Group's literary criticism. Apart from personal differences and the characteristic features which underlie the writings of each of them, they have been influenced by the Arab critics of their time and to a certain extent by English style.

The special attention which the two critics paid to the individual character of the poet or writer, the logical approach to their subject matter and the impartial attitude which they adopted are the basic common features of their critical writings.

The areas of emphasis in this criticism are demonstrably consistent with the Group's literary concepts.

The element of subjectivity underlies the entire poetic output of the Group. In effect their poetry is centred on their personal feelings and private experiences. Most predominant is the theme of love. Because of their disillusionment many of them saw the pleasures of love as

the only cure for their burdened souls.

In their love poetry the poets have covered a wide range of emotions. This has been reflected in a great number of poems some of which have been cited and studied.

The Group have also become aware of the attraction of natural scenery and included descriptions of it in their poetry.

Their elegiac poetry is marked by emotional depth and sincerity.

Members of the Group have given expression to their nationalistic feelings and reflected the discontent of the Sudanese people with foreign rule.

Many significant changes in form and style have taken place. The experimentation with free verse by two members of Al-Fajr represents a climax in the Group's endeavours to free their poetry from the canons of the conventional qasida.

The language of this poetry has also witnessed a considerable change. It has become markedly simple, tender and lyrical. New images and techniques have been introduced. These include the borrowing of religious words and idioms, the tendency to personify states of feelings and the employment of narrative descriptions.

## EPILOGUE

Early in the 1950s a distinguished Arab scholar noted that modern Arabic literature did not seem to adhere to the principles of any of the recognized literary movements of the West.<sup>1</sup> He believed that there was no evidence to suggest that the Arab poets and writers had systematically and whole-heartedly adopted the ideas and trends of any particular movement, not even those of romanticism. But the fact remains that modern Arabic literature has been greatly influenced and inspired by the ideas and trends of these literary movements, especially so in form and technique. Most significant is the impact of the English romantics.

The members of Al-Fajr were subject to this influence too. Despite this it is not possible to assign all of them to the romantic school, for in addition to the presence of romantic tendencies certain signs of symbolism and realism can be discerned in their works. This is particularly true of the poetry of Al-Tinay and M.A. Maḥjūb. Moreover, the social content of the Group's poetry does not allow us to brand them as dreamy romantics who are detached from the realities of life as some critics in the Sudan have implied.

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1. Cf. Hilāl, Al-Adab al-Muqāran, 1953, pp. 381-2.

As to the overall romantic guise in which the Group's poetry appears, and which is typified by their subjective attitude and the tendency to draw from their own experiences, it may safely be attributed to the peculiarly harsh circumstances in which the rising generation of the Sudan, including the Group, found themselves in the 1920s and 30s. The fact that similar conditions led to the appearance of the romantic movement in the West serves to highlight an accidentally common factor in both movements and need not imply the Group's slavish adoption of foreign ideas.

The literary movement of Al-Fajr has had a great impact on Sudanese life and literature. It marks the beginning of the first literary renaissance in the Sudan. Through their valuable contribution to Al-Fajr, to the cultural circles and to the social clubs of the time, the members of the Group succeeded in dragging the country out of its cultural apathy to join the greater world of scientific knowledge and foreign literature. For the first time in their history the Sudanese people were introduced to new forms of culture and civilization and made aware of the need for a kind of national literature which would portray their life and reflect their aspirations.

It may be concluded that the Al-Fajr literary movement was geared to the achievement of three main objectives:

- (1) To foster national consciousness and create a politically aware public. This has been achieved by focussing attention on the motherland, not only its beautiful natural scenery



but also its value and potential. The Sudanese people were made aware of their life, its promises and limitations.

(2) To disseminate the Group's new reformatory ideas. To a certain degree the Group have been successful in this respect.

(3) To help educated young Sudanese develop a kind of artistic taste and appreciate new aesthetic values. This has been accomplished through the fine specimens of poetry, essays and short stories which appeared in the journal.

At the hands of the members of Al-Fajr Arabic poetry and literary criticism in the Sudan have been carried many steps further, and brought in line with literary developments in the rest of the Arab world. They have been rejuvenated and enriched. While one can hardly trace any glimpse of originality, departure from established modes, or illuminating thought in the poetry of the neo-classicists of the Sudan, the poets of Al-Fajr have reflected a considerable degree of originality and innovation in form and content.

Although the movement was short-lived, the contributions of its members has remained as a great source of inspiration for the following generation for more than two decades. Indeed, even at the present time there are to be found some Sudanese poets who draw upon the examples of Al-Fajr.

## APPENDIX

Citation No. 1

من قصيدة ( حديث مع شيخ ) لمحمد عثمان محبوب  
راجع الفجر مجلد ٣ ، عدد ٨ ، صص ٢٤١ - ٢٤٣

تعال فحدثني حديث موقر	خلا منه تعريض وآخر زور
تركت لكم باب البلاد لتعلموا	إذا كان فيما تعلمون ظهير
وصرت اغنى للجمال مفردا	اسبح في أجوائه وأطير
وقلت شيوخ حنك الدهر منهم	عقولا لها في الحالكات ظهور
وقلتم شبابا قاصرون تطرفوا	حدا ركبهم في الطاعنين غرور
فما راعني الا بلاد تقسمت	واشباع أحزاب لهن شرور

.....

لك الله يا هذا فلست بتارك	جميلا اساقية الهوى ويزور
جميل اذا قبلته وهصرته	تعطف منه مائس ونفور
نسيت به أهل الزمان ومكرهم	وهما اذا ب القلب منه مرير

Citation No. 2

من قصيدة ( قضية الألوان ) لمحمد احمد عمر  
راجع الفجر مجلد ٣ ، عدد ١ ، ص ١٣٠

جريرتنا <sup>٢</sup> المورد <sup>٣</sup> اجاز هذا	بما قضت الشريعة والكتاب
رأينا الجمن يدعونا فهمنا	بحسن ليس يستره نقاب
وقد طفنا بكعبته حجيحا	وسبحنا وليس لنا تواب ؟؟
كبوزى ومنبوز أنحيا ؟	اجيونا فقد حان الجواب
والآ فاعصبوا منا عيونا	تعشق انه العجب العجاب
والآ فامحقوا فينا قلوبا	تجيب مناديا أبدا يجاب
والآ فاحجبوا عنا جمالا	نهيم به وتغد به الرقاب
والآ فاخلقونا كيف شئتم	فانا رغم مانبدو شباب

.....

رأينا لا وجود لآى حق	أحق القلب يلحقه اغتصاب ؟؟
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Citation No. 3

قصيدة ( أوداعنا ؟ ) لميمان

راجع الفجر مجلد ٢ ، عدد ١ ، ص ٢٤

أوداعا قبل ان تسعدنى	بجمال منك فياض الشعاع ؟
أوداعا قبل ان تطفئ لى	حرقة الشوق بمعسول دماع ؟
أوداعا أترى ابقيت لى	ما يريح القلب أو يرضى الطماع ؟
أوداعا شد ما تجلب لى	هذه اللفظة من فرط التماع
أوداعا ؟ ليت من علمنا	هذه الاشواق لم يخلق "وداع"

\* \* \* \*

كيف بالله ترانى عند ما	تتوارى والأمانى فى قناع ؟
واناديك فما يرجع لى	غير أصدااء تردن سراع
فتنام الليل ترتاد المنى	وأجوب الليل منشور القلاع
وتلاقى الصبح كالزهر ندى	والاقي الصبح منهوك صراع
فكفانى منك مالاقيته	مد معى غاضوسرى فيك ذاع

\* \* \* \*

أوداعا ؟ قف تمهل أكذا	يخفق القلب ولم تبعد ذراع ؟
أوداعا ؟ قف تمهل واهدنى	قبلة أنسى بها هذا الوداع
أوداعا ؟ لا فما ينفعنى	انت ان تذهب كل الكون ضاع

أوداعا ؟ قبله أخرى فما	أعذب القبلات من بعد امتناع
أوداعا ؟ ليتني منك كما	أنت منى فاجازيك بصاع
أوداعا ؟ أو تمضى هكذا	ليلة القدر هبوطا وارتفاع
أوداعا ؟ ليته كان اللقاء	أوداعا ؟ آه ما أقسى الوداع

Citation No. 4

قصيدة ( جيشان ) لمحمد أحمد عمر  
راجع الفجر مجلد ٣ ، عدد ٩ ، ص ٢٨٢

أى بشرى مستزف	أيها القلب المرف ؟
عندما تخفق كالطائر	تهتز وتهفو
أى ثقل من همومى	سوف يا قلب يخف ؟
أى رمع فى جفونى	سوف يرقى ويعجف ؟
أى وجد بين أضلاعى	سيهدا ويكف ؟
أى جرح من جراح	القلب يلتام ويعفو ؟
هل لعينى بعد طول	الجهد أن تغضى وتغفو ؟

\* \* \* \*

أيها الواهم يا قلبى	كم يغشاك ضعف
أنت إذ تفرق لا	تألو بآمالك تطفو

كم بها يا قلب تسمو	وبها حيناً تسف
حينما تخلق منها	عالمًا حيناً يسف
أنت تنسى كل	لامك لو مستك كف
أنت تنساها وتنسى	ظلم من يقسو ويجفو
كم عجيب أنت يا	قلبي ان يغشاك ضعف

\* \* \* \*

كلما غادر ضيف	مزماً يهبط ضيف
كلما نمت خلتي	وادمعاً أشجاك طرف
وضعيفاً أنت ما	زلت ... حيناً ان تخف

\* \* \* \*

ليتني والنيل راق	حسوا ليها يحف
ليلة أخلد الشعر	بها صدق وخلف
وبها جلجل صوت	القلب لا يغشاه زيف :
قد عشقنا فانصفونا	أو ان شئتم أطفو

\* \* \* \*

كم مصيخ لا يبالي	بندائي وسميع يستخف
عابث يعلم ما يجهل	من اسمي فيهمفو
أحبب الأسماء تو	ليها كما يرضيك عطف

\* \* \* \*

نحن في الدنيا ترانا	ان بدا حسن يشف
نملأ الدنيا نشيدا	خالدا والخلد وقف

Citation No. 5

قصيدة ( اعلان حب ) للسنى  
راجع ديوان السنى ، ص ١٣٣

هواك سر عليه القلب منطبق	وبعض حراسه الاحراج والقلق
فماله اليوم أوهى كتمه جلدى	وكاد من حجب الظلما ينشق ؟
حملت قلبى عبثا فوق طاقتيه	من التكم وهو الما جن النزق
أجن سرى أعواما فما نبست	به الشفاء ولا ننت به الحدق
لم تسمع الاذن من اصداؤه أثرا	وهو الذى مثل موج البحر يصطفق
ولم أناج به نفسى بخلوتها	وفى احاسيسها من عطرها عبق
أخشى عليه عيون الناس تلحمه	طورا ، وأخشى على جنبى تحترق
وكم تعسفت فى حبيك من نهج	عجب سينكره سمع الألى عشقوا
فكم تحاشيت أن ألقاك خشية أن	تشى البوادر والمكنون ينطلق
ولم احدثك عن حب احس به	أثاره المفريان : الظرف والألق
واليوم ضاق به صدرى فباح به	شعرى ورد به الاصباح والغسق
فحدثك الليالى كيف عذبنى	أيام بعدك عنى الهوى والأرق
وحدثك بكورى كيف انكرها	ما غير طلعتك الزهراء لى فلق
فليرهف الدهر آذانا لا سمعه	بث الهوى بقصيد كاد يأتلق
نفسى ويبقى على الأيام ملحمة	نشوى ترجعها الأزمان والألق



Citation No. 6

قصيدة ( اليك ) لمحمود حمدى  
راجع ديوان ( الشباب الأول ) ، ص ١٤٧

يا من شغلت به عن كل ما نظرت	عيني وما سمعت ان نى من الناس
لا تحسب البسمات الحائرات على	وجهي مع الناس عن بشروايتنا
لم يبق لى من شعورى بالحياة سوى	وجدى عليك وانت النافر القاسى
اذا نسيت ودادى أو شغلت بما	سواه عفوا فانى لست بالناسى
ولن أحملك الذنب العظيم اذا	مات محترقا فى نار احساسى

Citation No. 7

من قصيدة ( غنى أوليلة على الشاطى ) لمحمود حمدى  
راجع ديوان ( الشباب الأول ) ص ٢٥ - ٢٦

غن يا بلبل ماشئت وغن	لا تحاذر ما يرى الرجعى فينا
وأعد يا زينة الدنيا وشنى	نغمات تلهب النفس حنيننا
واشجننا نفديك يا حلوا التثنى	اننا قوم تحذنا الحب دينا
	واعد خمرة هاتيك العيون
	انها الخمرة ما فيها عذاب

.....

غن فالألحان رى للنفوس      وشفاء من قديمات العلل  
وأدرها أنها نعم الكؤوس      تذهب الهم وتمضى بالطل  
وتمايل واشد ياصنو الشموس      واعد فى النفس لذات الأمل

فالذى انشاك فتان الجفون

لم يحرم نهب لذات الشباب

أترى من صاغ لذات الحياة      عابثا كان بما صاغ وقال ؟  
أوترى من صاغت الحسن يداه      صاغه محض واعتزاز وجلال  
أوترى الأعين هذه والشفاه      خلقت الا لتقدير الجمال ؟

انما ضل اناس يحسبون

انما الحب انتقام وسباب

ياحبيبي يارعاك الله زدنا      قبل ان تمضى الثوانى يا حبيبي  
نحن قوم بمزايك فستنا      أفلا تحنو على هذى القلوب  
قد خلقتكم بجمال وخلقنا      بشعر ذاكيات كاللهيب

فصلونا نختلس صفو السنين

( انما اللذات خلص وانتهاب )

Citation No. 8

من قصيدة ( أسير ) للسنى  
راجع ديوان السنى ، ص ٤٦

أيتها الصائد لاشلت يدك	انت من احكم لى هنى الشباك
أحكم القيد فانى ( طائر )	هام - دنياه - بمنسوب الشراك
أحكم القيد وهل قيدي سوى	ما تجلى أو تخفى من سناك
انه نشوة روح هائم	انه السحر فدعنى من رقاك
ان اندى نغم فى خلدى	هو انذارك : هيهات الفكك
. . .	
كيف أسلوك فانى طائر	ما عرفت الخلد الأفى نراك
( طائر ) ميزته فى سربه	انه يحيا لترجيع غناك
سرنى أسرك اياى فما	احسد الطير وقد جاز السماك
ما الذى اطلب فى الافق فما	وهج البدر بأشهى من ضياك
ما الذى انشد فى هام الربى	أربيع الحسن منشور هناك . . ؟
انه هنا لدينا قائم	حدث قلبى عنه وجنتاك
فلتدعنى امتع النفس به	ثم بشرنى بهيهات الفكك

Citation No. 9

من قصيدة (خفقة قلب) لمحمد احمد محبوب  
راجع ديوان " قصة قلب " ص ٨٢ - ٨٣

.....

يلهب الحس ويدي الحدقا	سحر عينيك وما اعجبه
يعرف الله الذى قد خلقا	فيه سر الكون من يعرفه
عن عباد الله عبد صدقا	انه الحسن ولا يحجبه
وارحمى العاشق موفود التقى	فاتركى الصد وحى والهيا
كلما شام جمالا صدقا	راهب الحسن الذى يكلؤه
لاأرى من رقه من عتقا	حسنك الغالى الذى نعبد
مقلة حرى وقلب خفقا	هو نور الله لاتجهله
جنة ناعم فيها باللقا	فاسأل الله اذا شئت لنا

Citation No. 10

قصيدة ( جمال وقلوب ) للتيجانى يوسف بشير  
راجع ديوان " اشراقة " ص ١١٥

لك انفا سنا هياما وحبيا	وعبدناك يا جمال وصقنا
ينابيعها لعينيك قربى	ووهبنا لك الحياة وفجرنا

وسمونا بكل ما فيك من ضعف  
وحبوناك ما يزيدك يا الفز  
وز هبنا بما يفسر معناك  
من ترى وزع المفاتن يا حسن  
من ترى علم القلوب هو الحسن  
من ترى ألهم الجمال وقد اعطاه  
أن يبيت الهوى مفاتن في جفن  
من ترى وثق العرى بين مس  
انه صانع القلوب التي تنصب  
يا جمال الحياة في حيثما كان  
وجمال الحياة في كل من أعمل  
أقس باحسن ما تريد وتبفسى  
أنا وحدي دنيا هوى لك فيها

جميل حتى استفاض وأربى  
وضوحا وأنت تفتأ صعبا  
بعيدا وأنت أكثر قربا  
ومن ذا أوحى لنا أن نحب  
وقال ابعدي من السحر ربا  
من جيرة الحوادث عضبا  
بليغ وأن يجود ويأبى  
حورين اسماهما جمالا وقلبا  
في قلب الحسن صبا  
أما نا وحيثما كان رعبا  
شرقا وكل من سار غربا  
أو فكن هينا على النفس رطبا  
كل كنز من الشاعر قربي

Citation No. 11

قصيدة ( شك ) لميمان  
راجع الفجر ، مجلد ١ ، عدد ٢٢ ، ص ١٠٣٤

شك كهذا الليل منشور الذوائب  
أنا فيه سارية حمى

أضفى على فكرى مدولا من غياهب  
عنها مزار الشط لاجب

وتهم والا نى غالسب	تعلو وتهبط تارة
عادت من الحرب السوائب	فتعود عانبة كما
اذا غدا لى الشك صاحب	ويلى وويلك يافؤاد
على أرى شبحا تراقب	كمذا أهوم فى الدجى
له وتذهب فى المذاهب	وتظل تفترض الظنون
بصحة والظن كاذب	فانابدأ شبح غصت
لو أننى كنت المعاتب	وهبت معتذرا كما
عتب سوى شوق لغائب	لا يافؤاد فالننا
والبدر أجفل والكواكب	هذا الصباح قد انجلى
كبسة فى ثغر غاضب	والشمس تقتحم التلاع
وانفض من الحب الرواجب	هذا الصباح فقم بنا
مبدأ فى صدر راهب	ماذأأتلث فى مكانك
شرع الهوى شرع الغرائب	شرع عجيب كله

Citation No. 12

من قصيدة (عواطف) للتنى  
راجع ديوان التنى ص ٤٢ - ٤٣

حبيبى حبيب النفسى هلا تلاطف؟	محبك ضافته المساء المخاوف
فديتك يامولاي قدر عواطفى	وهل أنا يامولاي الأعواطف؟
والأفانى ضائع مضه الجوى	ولى كبد حرى وقلبى واجف

وتنازعنى الأشجان عيشى ضلالة	ومنها بقلبي كل ليلاً زاحف
وكم فى سواد الليل ابنى من المني	وكم فى سواد الليل قد سال جارف
يطول وجوى حين ذكراك حينما	أكون ولى منها مريح وناسف
وان سمعت اذ نأى صوتك قادما	فؤادى قبل العين منى يشارف
واما التقينا بعد أيام فرقة	أقام بقلبيننا من البشر طائف
واما اختلينا والحديث جرى بنا	جهلت من الأشياء ما أنا عارف
ويفقدنى حسى تناج محبيب	ومن بسمات الشفر تلك الخواطف
كأنى فى تلك السويعة ميت	ومن لى بموت مثل هذا يكاف

Citation No. 13

من قصيدة ( ساعة انتظار ) لمحمود حمدى  
راجع ديوان " الشباب الأول " ص ١٢٨ - ١٢٩

أنا فى انتظارك يا حبيب فهل ترى	تأتى ؟ ففى نغفى اليك شجون
قلق الخواطر لو رأيت تلفتى	لحسبت أنى عاشق مجنون

\* \* \*

هذى الشوانى مل لقلبي لم يحمر	صبرا بأنهن كأنهن سنين
ياساعتي هل فيك من داء الهوى	مثل فسير تارة وسكون ؟

\* \* \*

سجارتى شكرا وقد شاركتنى	نار الهوى وكذا الوفاء يكون
لكن موتك واحد وأنا الذى	فى كل يوم تعتريه منون

## Citation No. 14

من قصيدة ( بعد وقرب ) لمحمد احمد محبوب  
راجع ديوان " قصة قلب " ص ٣٩

.....

اغدا يفرق بيننا زمن	قامس وأيام بنا غدرت
انى لأخشى البين يفجعنا	غدرنا فنهكى صفحة طويت
انى لأخشى البين يألمنى	وصروف دهر بالنوى ولعت
فتعالى زودنى فأنت منى	كنا نناجيهما وقد عرضت
هلاً اهتلنا ما يمن لنا	فنبيل أحشاء لنا ظمئت
ان الحياة مهامه صغرت	والحبروضتها التى ينعت
فادم على نعيمه نضرا	ولتذهب الدنيا وما وسعت

## Citation No. 15

من قصيدة ( الروض الخرب ) لخلف الله بابكر  
راجع الفجر ، مجلد ١ ، عدد ٢١ ، ص ٩٨٧-٩٨٩

موحش والله هذا الروض ما	فيه عصفور على الغصن يغنى
أيها النازح من روض الندامى	كيف شاد بهم ألم يسللك عنى ؟
غننى يا طير واستمتع بصوتى	أين يا ابن الروضى من لحنك لحنى ؟
انى احنو على الطير اذا ما	كان شأن الطير فى العالم شأنى



أيها الشارد من دنياك رفقا  
بعضها أودى وهذا بعضنا  
لكنني سامع من بينها ...  
فهي اما رجعت في وكرها  
تلك افراخك حيرى تتباكى  
أحكم الفخ . . والقاها شباكا  
صوتها الباكي على العيش وراكا  
لحنها المحزون سالت مقلتاكا

\* \* \* \*

أنت يا ابن الجولا تعرف الا  
ورقا كما غنيت غنوا :  
كيف تشكو من زمان لست فيه  
دعك من همك يا طير واما  
جوك الرحب وغصنا يتثنى  
هدأ الليل ونام الناس عنا  
من ذوى الوجد ولا القلب المعنى  
عز من ينبيك بالهم فصلنا

\* \* \* \*

.....

حرك الطائر في الغصن جناحا  
مطرقا في الأرض محزونا كقلبي  
قلت : كفكف قال : ياليت ولكن  
قلت : ماذا ؟ قال لو تعلم ذكرى  
واستهل القول بالصمت وراحا  
يشبع الكون بكاء ونواحا  
انت أبكيت وجددت جراحا  
الهبث قلبي وسرلن بباحا

\* \* \* \*

أيها السائل عن روض الندامى  
روضها أوروضى الحانى عليها  
والندامى منذ فارقت الندامى  
كلما الساقى ادار الكأس فسى  
لا أراك الله فى روضك باسا  
حمل الدهر له سيفا وقاسا  
فارقوا ( وردا ) من الروضى و( آسا )  
مجلس صبوا على ذكرك كاسا

\* \* \* \*

.....

وتركنا خلفنا أكبادنا	فى يد الأيام نوليها حنيننا
وكأننا كل يوم قريبها	نسمع الصوت بسكاً وأنيننا
فهى اما ارسلت من دمعتها	دمعة حرى بكينا موجعينا
صاح لولا " قادر " من فوقنا	قدر البعد لكنا واصلينا

\* \* \* \*

العزاء الجم فى طير " يتامى "	والوداع العر ياروض الندامى
دهرنا منذ كان ياطير وكنا	مبصر أعشى وغر يتعامسى
فألزهيرات التى فى روضنا	قعد الدهر عليهن وقامنا
أصبح أنها ولت فولسى	عهدنا بالأهل والصحب القداما

Citation No. 16

من قصيدة ( وقفة على دار ) لمحمود حمدى  
راجع ديوان " الشباب الأول " ، ص ٣٣ - ٣٧

.....

درج الزمان واصبحت ساعاتنا	نكرا يهيج بها الندى الأحزاننا
وبقيت لا آتيك إلا باكيا	ولكم اتيتك ضاحكا فرحانا
ولكم نثرت على نيك قصائدى	واليوم انثر مد معى الهتاننا
ولكم درست بك المحبة والهوى	واليوم ادرس فرقة وهواننا
دنف أقام الشوق بين ضلوعه	نارا وفى افكاره نيراننا

\* \* \* \*

.....

سلفت ليالينا الحسان وهكذا	تضى ليالى الانس لا تتوانى
وبقيت بين الذكريات مقسما	قلبي الذى تخذ الهوى ايمانا
فهيجنى ذكرى مسارحنا التى	ضرب التصايب فوقها اعلانا
وتهيجنى خطرات ما بين الضحى	والصبح ماشادى الضحى غنانا
وتهيجنى خطرات ما بين الدجى	والفجر مابدر الدجى وافانا

Citation No. 17

قصيدة ( فى الطريق ) لـ محمد احمد محبوب  
راجع ديوان " قصة قلب " ص ٥٣ - ٥٤

هذا الطريق ... عرفته	وعرفت اعلام الطريق
فهناك نافذة بهـ	اضواء مصباح خفوق
كانت تضيئ لصاحبى	أيام كان بلا رفيق
أيام كان مع الهوى	يسرى كسجون طليق
ويقول لليل أتئد	ويضيق والدنيا تضيق
ويصيح محبوبس الصرا	خ عساه من مكر يفيق
ويدور حول الدار كل	(م) الليل يبحث عن صديق
ويعود عند الفجر مهزوما	يحملق فى الطريق
هذا الطريق .. عرفته	اتراه يعرف من أنا
عشرون عاما بعد هذا	لم يبق الا عهدنا

لم تبق إلا دارها	والناس تسأل من هنا ؟
مصباحها لا يجتلى	الآ كمحبوس السنى
وحدثها المزوج بالضحكات	يعيبث بالمدنا
لم تبق منه علالة	للعائشين على المنى
عشرون عاما ليتهها	عادت فاذا كرم أنا

Citation No. 18

من قصيدة ( فلسفة الوحدة ) للتيجانى عامر

راجع الفجر ، مجلد ٣ ، عدد ١٢ ، ص ٣٧٣

حبذا الوحدة من طبلنفسى	وغذا لشعورى وحسى
وصفا لخيالى وبيانى	ومجال ليراعى ولطرسى
وخلو لفؤادى من عناء	ولسمنى من أراجيف ورجس
ليتنى فى حضنها لا ابتغى	بدلا عنها بأخوان وانسى
هذه الوحدة فى البعد السحيق	فى جنان الأرض فى الجوالطليق
اسمع الاطيار فى اغصانها	تبعث الشجو الى قلبى الرقيق
وأرى الأنظار فى بستانها	بسمت عن كل فتان رشيق
كلما انظر فى انحاءها	تقع العين على لون انيق

Citation No. 19

من قصيدة ( ابن الطبيعة ) للطيب عبدالقادر  
راجع الفجر ، مجلد ١ ، عدد ٩ ، ص ٣٩٦

.....

ابن الطبيعة لا يغور سواها في	نفسي ولا تسمو به افكاري
رسمت بها ايدي الاله بدائعا	فتلوت منها أروع الاشعار
اماء ضمني اليك فانني	اهداء لغيرك لا يطيب جوارى
أوحيت لي سر "الجمال" قدب في	روحي وكان الى الكمال منزلي
ومن "البساطة" فيك صفت طرائفا	وتخذت منها "مذهبي" وشعاري

Citation No. 20

من قصيدة ( وطني ) للسنني  
راجع الفجر ، مجلد ١ ، عدد ٢٠ ، ص ٩٤٩ .  
وديوان السنني ص ٢٩ .

وطني شقيت بشيبي وشبابه	زمن سقاك السم من أكوابه
قد اسلموك الى الخراب ضحية	واليوم هل طربوا لصوت غرابه ؟
وطني تنازعه التحزب والهوى	هذا يكيد له وزاك طفلي به

ولقد يعانى من جفا ابنائه      فوق الذى عاناه من أغرابه  
بالأمس كانوا وحدة فتفرقت      فسطا المغير بظفروه وبنايه  
.....

وطنى يعيث به العمى ولا ترى      من دافع عن حوضه ورحابه  
واذا انبرى ليد ودعن سودانه      البارع المقدام من كتابه ...  
لم يعدم الشر الدخيل جماعة      لترتل الأمداح فى محرابه  
وطنى اصيب بمعشر آواهمو      وأظلمهم فمعوا ليوم خرابه  
لوظهر السودان من دخلائه      لتظهر السودان من أوشابه  
لهفى على السودان من دخلائه      لهفى على السودان من أحزابه

Citation No. 21

من قصيدة ( سبقت أوانى ) لصالح عبدالقادر  
راجع الفجر ، مجلد ٣ ، عدد ٤ ، ص ١١٨

وحسبى من الأيام وهى من العدا      فقد حمدت لى جرأتى وشباتى  
أضامت قلم أياس وعزت لم اهن      وضلت قلم اذهب مع الشبهات  
تجرعت ما بالكأس لا متأففا      فهات البقية من دنائك هات  
.....

خلقت غريبا فى بلاد غريبة      الى الحزم ما مت بأى صلات  
وما عرفت الأجهل وفاقة      وما اتصفت إلا بطول سبابة

ولما جرت كانت ورا الأقوات	جرت هذه الدنيا وعنهما تخلفت
وتحمل أعناتنا على أعنات	أبت هي إلا أن تعيش وشأنها
مفككة مختلة الحركات	كفى ألما انى أعيش بامة
أبيع لها فيما أبيع حياتى	بذلت لها جهد العقل ولم أزل
فضاعت كما ضاع الصدى بفلاة	وأرخت فيها مهجتي وانتظرتها
على كبد نأبت من الآهات	افكر فى آلامها ثم انشئني
فكم شقى الأحياء بالأموال	فلا بدع أن أشقى بأشلاء أمة

Citation No. 22

من قصيدة ( ما التمسنا المستحيلا ) لصالح عبدالقادر  
راجع الفجر ، مجلد ٣ ، عدد ٨ ، ص ٢٤٦

.....

فى بلاد أصبحت همًّا على القلب ثقيلا  
ولقد باتت على أيامها خطبا جليلا  
كم يلاقى المرء فى اصلاحها خمسا مهيلا  
ويعانى عنت الدنيا وان كان نبيلا  
ويعيش الحرف فيها جد مغبون زليلا

.....

أمة لا تنكر الضيم عليها أن تزولا  
 ولها أن تنكر النصح بريئا أم حويلا  
 أمة يقعد ها الجهل شبابا وكهولا  
 غالبا ترسقف في أغلالها جيلا فجيلا  
 .....

ان اردت العيش فيها بسلام عش جهولا  
 وملأ الارض نفاقا بريئا وفضولا  
 .....

أيها الحاكم فينا نظرة فالصبر عيلا  
 التمسنا العدل فيكم ما التمسنا المستحيلا  
 ان للشعب امانى حققوا منها القليلا  
 وله ضاعت حقوق شرحها كان طويلا

Citation No. 23

من قصيدة (الاشعور ؟) لصالح عبدالقادر  
 راجع الفجر، مجلد ٣، عدد ١٠، ص ٣٠٣

الام الجهل يفضحنا الام وهذا الدهر يوسعنا ملا ما  
 لقد هنا على الأيام حتى رأيت نكر اسمها فينا حراما  
 فلم تقبل لنا فيها وجودا ولم تفسح لنا فيها مقاما  
 ولم تعرف لنا فيها حقوقا ولم تقبل لنا فيها كلاما  
 .....



فيا لك امة تلهو وشعب توسد همه المضى وناما

\* \* \* \*

بنى وطنى يعز على أنى  
ألا تتحركون ألا شعور  
أستم امة ولكم حقوق  
.....  
أراكم فى بنى الدنيا يتاما  
الى كم تستخفون الملا ما  
الام سكو تكم عنها الا ما

سلوا القرن الذى عنه انعزلنا  
وهل عرفوا الخضوع أو استكانوا  
وهل يوما على خسفا قاموا  
سلوا أهليه هل عرفوا المنا ما  
وكانوا فى جبين الدهر زاما  
ومن حق على خسف أقاما

\* \* \* \*

تمر قوافل الأيام عجللى  
وتعيا هذه الدنيا بشعب  
وتخطى فى مراحلها النياما  
أضاع حقوقه فيها وهاما

Citation No. 24

من قصيدة ( د معة على طفل ) للتيجاني يوسف بشير  
راجع ديوان " اشراقة " ص ص ٧٠ - ٧٢

ياخذن ناضرة الأزاهر فى الضحى  
لك فى قرارة كل عين عسيرة  
وعلى جوانب كل عين لوعة  
وجوى كتحنان الرؤوم تصده  
ورهب زنبقة الأريض الناضر  
حرى . ترقرق ثرة بمحاجرى  
ماستفيق ، وجذوة بمشاعرى  
ن كرى ( محمدها ) بشجواثر

يمشى الزهى باديم وجه مشرق منه ويسفر عن مليك قاصر  
وتحس في عينيه عز متوج في الأرض ناه في البقاع وآمر  
قلعه لو عاش يمتلك الثرى ويرد غائلة الزمان الجائر

.....

\* \* \* \*

ياويح من ضربا عليك حماهما من والد ين وذات طرف ساهر  
يتفقدانك في الدجى من لوعة لدن اعتلت وخار عزم الصابر  
عقد الرجاء عليك من قلبيهما عقد الذ وائب بعضها بالآخر  
وتوقعا لك في الثرى مستقبلا وتكهنا لك من زمان غابر

\* \* \* +\*+

فتقصدتك يد المنونة وأنت في حجر الأمومة كالملك الطاهر  
نزعتك فانتزعت أمانى أسرة ظمأى اليك وريها بالناظر  
طبعت على فمك الجميل وداعها في قبة حرى ودمع فاتر  
تتعثر العبرات من هلع بها وتظل قائمة مقام الحائر  
هذا الذى كفى ضراعة ما كان يفصحها بيان الشاعر  
كالخاطر الوهمى جال ( محمد ) فى البيت ثم مضى مضى الخاطر

Citation No. 25

من قصيدة (على قبر حبيب) للتيجانى يوسف بشير  
راجع ديوان " اشراقة " ص ١٠١

.....

هنا جمال الحياة يطوى هنا عيون الهوى تنام  
هنا سهام القضاء نشوى وها هنا طامة وجام

أصاب رماحه وأشوى	فموجل الشرب والمدام
هذه كأمه تروى	من خمرها الأرض والرجام
يالوعة تملأ الصحارى	وطلسما يزحم القبورا
كيف اتخذت العراء دارا	ولم تكن تأمن القصورا ؟
كيف اقطعتها ديارا	وكيف وسدتها صخورا ؟
وكنت تستنفر العذارى	ينثرن من حولك الزهورا ؟

Citation No. 26

من قصيدة ( بنت الأمير ) لمحمد احمد محبوب  
راجع ديوان " قصة قلب " ص ص ١١٢-١١٨

امى العزيزة لاتجيب ندائى	وعهدتها تبكى لربكائى
لم يبق فى دنياى ما أشقى به	من بعد ما خبرت من انباء
ذهب الرجاء ولم أكن مترقبا	آى العزاء وقد فقدت عزائى
ماكنت أحسبني وقد شط النوى	أنى افارقها لغير لقاء
أبدا ولم أحسب نهاية عطفها	تلك الدموع تسح كالاندا
لكنه قدر تحتم وقعه	فغدوت فى الدنيا حليف شقاء
هذى وصيتها اردد لفظها	فأرى حنان الام للأبناء
فى ساعة النزاع الأخير وهوله	ماهسها إلا جزيل هنائى

وأنا ما أهواه من علياء  
من خلفته كرائد الصحراء  
ما يشتكيه ، ولا أخ لبلاء

وتود لو أنى أعيش منعا  
وتود لو تدرى مصير وحيدها  
لا والد يحنو ولا اخت ترى

.....

كنت الفداء لمن تود فدائى  
وفقدت صبرى واضمحل رجائى  
أهكى لفقد أو نزول بلاء  
وأمومة عزت عن النظر أراء  
ويعم قبرك بالسنا الوضاء

أما قد حم القضاء وليتنى  
فى يوم نعيك قد فقدت شجاعتى  
وطفقت أهكى بالدموع ولم أكن  
لكن فقدك فقد عطف شامل  
الله يلهمنى الجميل مضاعفا

Citation No. 27

من قصيدة ( الربان الفارق ) لزين العابدين ابراهيم  
( راجع الفجر ، مجلد ٣ ، عدد ٢ ، ص ٥٣ - ٥٤ )

لسبات طال بالقبر مداه  
لشاة فى دياجير سناه

هكذا عاش قليلا ومضى  
لاح للناس كبدر لم يدم

\* \* \* \*

حل بالدنيا فطلقت الحياة  
أملأ فيك صريعا فرشا  
فى لهيب يتلوى جانباه

يا قصر العهد ما ذا خلته  
كل فرد يوم وليت رأى  
كل صدر بات من أشجانه

كل عين أرسططت من عينها      أي دمع بان بالخد أساه  
كل نفس أفصحت أعطتها      عن جراح رب في النفس أذاه

\* \* \* \*

.....

أيها الملقى بسيت ط به      غير صيمت من جلال قد كساه  
ذلك الصمت بليغ وكذا      كنت بالصمت بليغا في الحياه  
لم تكن تعنى بط في سهلها      من ضجيج يخدع الاعى صدا ه

\* \* \* \*

قم تأمل امة خلفتها      كقطع تاه في عرض الفلاه  
كيف سارت لا تعي مشدوهة      كل وجه مطرق مطر هاه  
أودعت في النعش من أفلا زها      من تلقى نائدا عنها ردا ه

\* \* \* \*

قم تأمل زورقا غادرت ه      من غمام ضلل الهادي رجاه  
قد سها عن حاله أربابه      فرماه في هلاك طارمها  
ذلك المحروم من ربان ه      ور لو أوفى على بر النجاه  
مال والربان في أوحاله      غارق تنذك في قيد يده

Citation No. 28

قصيدة ( اليك ) لميمان

راجع الفجر مجلد ٣ عدد ٥ صص ١٥٥

لا تسألني المستقبل

واسألني الماضي

يا أختاه ففيه العزاء

أدع لي طيف الأمان

واستر

خلفها يا ذا المحيا

ثم انظر

هل ترى غير حناني ؟  
سبيغ مني من فؤادي وجناني  
وحبته السحر أعشاب دوان  
كالدرر

\* \* \* \*

تلك دنيا من غرام دائم  
ليس يفنى  
مثلتها بسمة من باسم  
طاف وهنا  
أرنولي منها كروح هائم  
كم تمنى  
لو ينال الرى يا سحر المحيا

\* \* \* \*

أرقب الصبح وزا الفجر الجميل  
وابتهاج السحب أبان الاصيل  
ثم راقب  
قلبي الخفاق يا سحر المحيا

\* \* \* \*

كم شكا للصبح ويلات الهيام  
وشكى لليل والبدر التمام  
مر شكوى

أترى كانت نفاقا

أم غراما واشتياقا

ليس يروى

أرقب الصبح وزا الفجر الجميل  
وابتهاج السحب أبان الاصيل  
ثم راقب  
قلبي الخفاق يا سحر المحيا

Citation No. 29

قصيدة ( آرم الصغير ) لمحمد احمد محبوب

راجع الفجر ، مجلد ١ عدد ١٦ صص ٢١٨ -

تارة ييكى وطورا يلعب

أما تراه لا يبالي  
يتمنى ، يترجى ، يتدلل  
يكتم الغيظ ، يظهر الحب  
يطلب النجم ويكسى ان فشل

\* \* \*

ذلك الطفل الغريب  
فى صعود وهبوط وضجيج وهدوء  
يحكم الكون ويبنى ويعيد  
يزعج القط ويطوى ذيله  
ويخاف النمل فى الأرض يسير

\* \* \*

ما جوارا ان رضى  
وبخيل ان غضب  
أنت مرسلت أدري كثرة  
أنت شيطان أم ملك  
أم أنت من هذا البشر ؟

\* \* \*

فيك خير وشرور وحسد  
تنشر الحب لطسيرك  
وتذيق الشاة أنواع الألم  
وأخوك الطفل لا ترحمه  
تزدريه وتعانى ان فرح

\* \* \*

هذه اللعبة ما أجملها  
تقنيها في اشتياق ومرح  
وتباهي فتية الحي بها  
وتريني حسننها في ظفر  
وغدا تترك اللعبة في حكم العدم

\* \* \*

وغدا يلى من غدد  
تتمشى وفق غايات الزمن  
تترك اللهو تطلب العلم  
تسهر الليل في دأب  
وتعاني من تصاريف الأزل

\* \* \*

تتمنى ولكن في وجل  
من تكاليف الأمانى  
وتضحى وتقاسى وتناجى  
وتلاقى مالقينا من هوى  
وضلال وشار في الزمن

\* \* \*

ثم تنسى يا حبيبي  
عذب هاتيك الأمانى  
وترى الجنة كوخا هارثا



يلتقى الزوجان فيه والسنون  
وترى فى النسل ترياق الأمل

\* \* \*

قد تقول الشعر أو قد لاتقول  
وتنال المجد فى فجر الشباب  
أوتقضى العمر فى يؤس سحق  
أنت منى صورة قد مثلت  
ماض العيش وأيام الصخب

\* \* \*

أنت منى وأنا  
نسج أجيال مضت  
أنت من آدم صورة  
حسن الفجر فيها والمعا  
وكذا الناس ظلال وصور

A SPECIMEN TITLE PAGE

عدد ١ **الفجر** جلد ١

مجلة نصف شهرية تأسست في ١٩٣٥ في القاهرة

الإدارة العامة	تأليف الأستاذ
بالخرطوم	مُنشأ ورئيس تحريرها
ص.ب. — ٢٩٧	٥٠ عن سنة ١٩٣٥
تدوين — ٤٦٢	عزقة بنت عبدات ٢٥
	٧٠ سنة ١٩٣٥

الخرطوم في يوم السبت ١٨ صفر سنة ١٣٥٥ - ١٩٣٥

كلمة المحرر

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

(( قال هذه سبيلي ))

الحمد لله الذي هدانا لهذا وما كنا لنبتدئ لولا أن هدانا الله والصلاة والسلام على منقوة خلقه الناطق بالحق وعلى آله وصحبه والتابعين وعلى جميع الأنبياء والمرسلين .  
أما بعد — فهذه صحيفة بين يدي قارئها صورة صادقة ، بقدر ما نستطيع أن يصور ، لمبدئنا الذي ندن به في خدمة ( الآداب والفنون والثقافة العامة ) بذكر خدمة هذه الأمة السودانية وهذه اللغة العربية قبل كل شيء وبعد كل شيء ، رائدنا الإصلاح ما استطعنا : نقول كلمة الحق لا نبالي ما يعيننا من وراءنا ولا ندن لفظة ولا نفرد بتعبية أو خضوع في رأي أو عمل

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